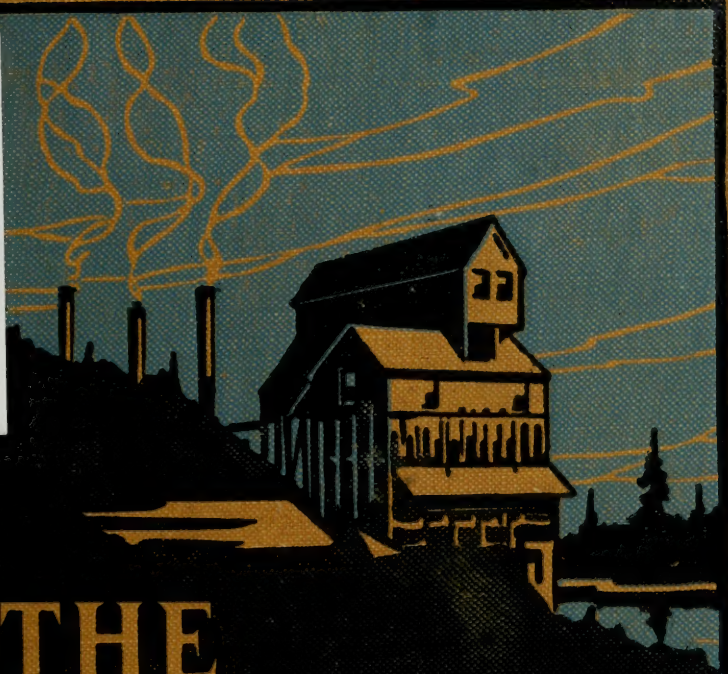

THE WILDCATTERS

S. A. WHITE

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By
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etc.

TORONTO
William Briggs
1912

THE WILDCATTERS.

BOOK ONE.

CHAPTER I.

"TELEGRAM, sir!"

Carl Glover swung round on the pedestal of his chair in the rotunda of Toronto's biggest hotel and grasped the yellow slip. The typewriting was for a moment illegible. Then his hasty glance cleared, and he read:

"Wreck on G. T. R. near South River. Uncle hurt. Come at once.—R. R. GAINES."

Glover jumped up with an impetuosity that sent the chair skidding along the tiled floor. He was at the elevator shaft in an instant and inside his room the next. It took but a few moments to throw some necessary articles into a grip, to dash for the street and catch a car. The news had spread, and many people crowded about the bulletin boards.

Glover looked at his telegram again, when some one plumped in beside him.

"Hello, Carl!" roared the leonine voice of Jerry Bland; "heard of the spill?"

For answer Carl passed the telegram. Jerry's monstrous tone subsided into a muffled, "Phew! hurt, eh? Likely serious, when they want you. Who's Gaines?"

"Roadmaster. He must have been on the train. What one was it, did you hear?"

"The express from North Bay. It struck a freight."

"Ah! And she runs fast. I wonder if it's very bad."

"Think a lot of him?" Bland interrogated.

"You've hit it, Jerry. He's done everything for me. Why, I'd be like those," pointing to a group of street gamins, "if it hadn't been for him. When I was left an orphan down in that little village by the Humber—you know it, Jerry—he was the only living relative. Just old Jake Graham between the Children's Home and me! But he did it, Jerry. That was before his strike in Cobalt—and they were hard days for him. Yet he sent me through collegiate and university without a murmur. Now, I'd hate to lose him just as I am getting my first chance at real life."

"Carl, I can't picture you as a waif. At Varsity we called you 'The Prince,' and you seemed to fit the name always."

But Carl's thoughts were roaming far, backward and forward, even to the little village by the Humber.

They shouldered it into the Union Station, and discovered that a special train with doctors, nurses and officials was being sent out. The telegram from Gaines was Carl's passport to it.

"Good-bye," was all Jerry said, as he left him to get his own train.

"Good-bye, old man," came back in an equally husky voice.

CHAPTER II.

EVENING lay in soft shadows along the ridges above the roadbed as Glover's train pulled into the scene of the disaster. Gaines was on the steps before Carl could get off.

"It's all right," he said hastily. "That telegram has worried me. I intended to say why he wanted you, but in the rush I didn't. See? It's business—Cobalt mines or something to look after. Graham's not seriously hurt. He will have to lie up for some weeks, though. He broke his leg and one or two ribs, but it is not dangerous at all. You understand?"

"Quite," Carl said, with satisfaction. A great weight had been lifted from his mind. "Is he here?" he asked.

"No, we sent him up to North Bay with the first of the rescued. He wants you up, too, as soon as possible. We will have the rest out shortly."

"I will help," said the nephew, throwing off his long coat.

"No," Gaines interposed. "There are plenty of crews at work—too many, in fact."

"How many casualties?"

"Too many—" and then the official attitude asserted itself, and no more information was forthcoming.

Gaines was off. Left to himself, Carl went farther up and mingled with the crowds. It was indeed a bad smash. Through some blunder of operator or despatcher the heavy freight was on the line when the passenger should have had it. A sharp curve, snaking through the bluffs, had hidden the two trains from each other. One hundred feet from a fringing cover of rock evergreen the giant moguls ploughed together unchecked. The awful impact had demolished both locomotives. One lay like a heap of scrap iron, only a twisted, battered mass of boiler-plates, wheel-flange, rod, shaft, guard and lever, in place of the perfect mechanical power it had been. The other seemed to have been heavier and to have driven catapult-like, on lifting from the rails at first shock, clear through and over the upper works of the lighter. It lay, with its tender, nose down in the roadbed. Crushed by this engine, two cars were splintered to matchwood, and here most of the injured had been found.

Down beside the scrap-iron heap another coach was jammed V-shaped against a jutting angle of rock with sides and bottom almost cut away by rescuers' axes. Only three of the passenger cars suffered in the collision. Two others were jarred off, but having ploughed along the ties, stood nearly upright. The express car was somewhere in the stream beneath, and the awful horror of it struck Carl when he saw where every

car might have been. Fate's hand seemed to be in it. The string of freight cars lay sprawling down the embankment almost to the river's edge, like a child's blocks carelessly thrown aside after play. Both engineers with their firemen had been killed at their posts, and the express messenger was buried in the waters with his coach.

Slowly the twilight gloomed bluff and evergreen expanse, and a new, white moon came trembling up among wide-eyed stars. Carl climbed high into the rocks till sounds below became faint; then he sat watching. Each chaotic mass of wreckage showed now but indistinctly upon and beside the shattered road. The auxiliary lay grimly waiting with huge derrick arms and wrecking machinery ready for its turn. Moving human figures passed to and fro, to and fro, now in shadow, now thrown boldly into relief by the glare of fires where they were burning all useless rubbish beside the line. In places he could see them go round and round, round and round in the one spot, and knew they were jacking. Crowds of people surrounded them, often impeding and interfering with the work, and Carl saw these throngs ordered back more than once by some official. It was a strange, wild panorama, with the stolid grey crags and vistas of green ridges for a setting. The little stream ran as a silver dribble, mirroring its width of sky pure-clouded over quiet blue.

Getting impatient, Carl wandered down again, and hunted up Gaines, who was directing operations. They

hoped to be through in a few minutes, he said, if the North Bay train would only come in as soon. There proved, however, some delay, and it was half an hour before the pleasing blast of her whistle sounded up the road. When she slid down the cuts, the remaining wounded were made comfortable in berths, and Carl boarded the caboose. Quickly they reversed and glided north, while the wrecking cars drew up, beginning their throb, roar, rattle, and clank as they tore away each blockading mass from the track.

CHAPTER III.

JAKE GRAHAM lay in the private ward of the General Hospital at North Bay, with his legs and ribs in bandages, yet his cheery light-heartedness belied the pain he felt. There was nothing of complaint in the voice that hailed Carl when he arrived.

"Hello, boy!" he said, giving a strong hand-grip. "I'm used up, you see. Not like some poor beggars, though! Did you see them?"

"Only a few," Carl answered. "Some were pretty bad. But yours—is it a clean break?"

"Straight!—so Doctor King said. Two ribs were cracked, also. It means six weeks in bed and three more on the crutch. Exasperating delay! I don't mind the pain; a little does one good, but I've got this mine development right on my hands. That's why I've sent for you. Do you understand, boy? This must be looked after right away. You're to do it."

"I?" Carl cried. "Why, I wouldn't know pay ore from slag."

"You'll learn. Freeman, the boss, knows his business, and you'll soon get the run of things. You have executive ability, and you can manage those affairs for me just A1 till I get out again. Two months from now I'll

be able to walk Cobalt again. The machinery is all there; the first shaft is down and the others are begun. Freeman is directing. It will be no trouble and you'll learn a pile. I was going to take you back, anyhow. You'll be in the new company when it is formed, so you can study conditions and get ideas—Deuce take that leg!" he ejaculated at a sudden twinge. "How does that strike you?"

"I will do my best," was Carl's answer, "though I warn you I'm a mighty poor substitute."

"That's all right. I know you, and I trust you. If you are ever in doubt, follow Freeman's advice. He is an old hand."

"When do I begin?"

"To-morrow. Go right up in the morning. I was on my way to see Jasper about forming the company and floating its stock, but that will wait. I should have gone back again to-morrow morning. The work can't be delayed, so you shall go instead."

"It is settled, then, uncle! How shall I commence?"

"The plans are all there, and Freeman knows how to go on. We had started Number Two Shaft. You'll complete that, and then begin Number Three. There will be the erection of houses and perhaps the running of a few drifts. I think by that time I will be around."

"Then there is nothing really difficult? If I should spoil the development and create a depression in feeling about this location, what then?"

"You will not, Carl! There is no danger. I want you simply for a nominal head to hold the chair, as it were, till these broken bones get sound."

At this juncture Doctor King entered the ward.

"My nephew, Carl Glover—Doctor King," said Graham, by way of introduction.

Carl extended his hand rather absently. He was thinking of this new duty thrown on him, so strangely at variance with his leaning towards art. He had hoped to be a painter; in the twinkling of an eye fate had reached out and made him a miner.

"Glover, Glover," the Doctor repeated, musingly. Then he looked sharply at Carl. "Why," he burst out, "You're the 'Varsity half—'The Prince' they called you, eh?"

Carl nodded. "'Varsity what?" his uncle interrupted.

"Half," King answered, "football, you know—not your game, Mr. Graham! Yours is mines, I hear. But if you play that as well as your nephew plays half, it's luck to the mines. I saw that game with McGill. It was great."

Carl warmed to the Doctor. Here was a man who hadn't entirely lost the good old football heart in his profession. He brightened at once. "You saw it?" he said. "Yes, it was a good game."

"Your beggarly quarter lost that game," snapped King.

"That was my opinion!" Carl exclaimed in surprise. "We debated that point for weeks. Bland and

the rest wouldn't think it for a moment. They contended it was the full and scrim both."

"Who is Bland?"

"Our big centre-half."

"Ah, yes, I remember. He bucked the line in fine shape. But it wasn't the full back or the scrimmage, either. If the quarter had been right, it would have been different."

"Deuce take your sports!" the uncle broke in, good-naturedly. "Look here, Doctor, this youngster isn't playing football now. He is playing with mines and goes to Cobalt to-morrow morning in place of his smashed uncle, and I want to finish my talk with him. See!"

"Ha!" the Doctor exclaimed, "glad to hear it. But say, that reminds me of yourself. I was almost forgetting my patient in reminiscences of the gridiron. You have to sleep. I'll give you five minutes to finish. Then you must take these tablets. Come, hurry!"

And true to his word, Doctor King allowed them but five minutes. He appeared at the end of that space with a sleeping potion for Graham.

"Sorry," he said, "but we must give the frame and those bones some rest or they will be a long, long time in healing. Your plans and preparations suddenly thwarted after this fashion no doubt disturb you considerably, Mr. Graham, but there is no use in taking but a philosophic view of the situation. Best rest, soonest mended—that's the programme!"

"I guess you are right," the uncle admitted. "Good-bye, boy."

"Good-bye," said Carl, and shook old Jake's hand once more.

"Just one word, Carl," his uncle added—"watch the other owners. Don't let them investigate and take points on our works. And, Carl, keep away from the games of chance up there. I've played in my time, but for a young man starting out it's a bad, bad business. It was your father's one vice, you know, and we inherit tendencies. So give them the nod, boy! I hate to preach, but that's common sense. Do you hear?"

"Yes," said Carl; "good-bye!"

CHAPTER IV.

THIS was Cobalt!

This was magical, illusive, enthralling Cobalt. Here was the Mecca of prospectors gathered from all points of the continent, with the fever of years at heart and mountain-steeled muscle on limb. Knights of the pick and search, bound to an undying ambition, happy in hardship and adversity, strong in toil and trial, imperturbable amid deepest disappointment, they go shoulder to shoulder with the lumbermen in blazing the pioneer way. Right in the midst of the Temiskaming wild lies this silver magnet that draws. There is mystery in its surrounding, in itself, in the very atmosphere; something infinitely entrancing and undeniably pregnant pervades Cobalt and the wilds about. It thrilled Carl with a feeling not to be analyzed. Why should this mite of a wilderness be Cobalt, the mythical and realistic? How was it different from all other parts of that same hunters' paradise?

Through a vast region of timber, rock, chasm, and ridge, dotted with slush, low valley, stream and lake, two twin streaks of steel bore northward. On either side the coveted ore has been bared, and mines, mines and mines dot the newly-learned townships, lands which

had never awakened from their primeval sleep till the anxious pick came tapping. Coleman is Coleman now; Buck is Buck; Lorraine is Lorraine, just as York is York. Under what other conditions would the waste thus respond to the call of civilization? Only under power of hidden riches! Deep-buried, closely formed in parallel veins, uncertain, far scattered, or missing altogether, they lure and beckon, mighty latent bodies of much good—and evil. How many moccasined feet have stood where now syndicate millions are wrapped! How many Salteaux tribes have spread their tepees over the unborn silver and never known its blessing or curse! How many souls have loved this great untouched expanse for itself alone before commercial hum usurped the virgin silence! This was Cobalt, the richest silver district of the world! This was what once had been the wildest, most rugged spot in all that vast area of solitude.

How quickly changes come! Now a busy mart instead of a single camp-fire; steamboat lines on lake and river instead of a solitary passing canoe; and thousands of toilers in place of an occasional hunter or voyageur. This was Cobalt!—a vision point for the eyes of the world in lieu of being an unknown finger spot on the map.

In those first few days Carl grasped the characteristics and individualities of the place and its men. There were scenes and incidents, hearts and lives, labours and undertakings to gladden his soul and make him love

the spot. He felt the rush and thrill, the magic pulse that throbbed through every new-comer's frame and claimed him as one of the veteran band. There was picturesqueness, romance, mystery; there was wild beauty, nature's pageant, the call of the wide places. Everywhere one felt it was Cobalt's destiny to be great. Then as always inseparable from the large, great and grand, there were the little blots that marred, men of uncertain character, and places of vice. Mingled together were the rich and the striving; magnate, promotor, capitalist, investor, rubbed shoulders with the card sharp and crafty plunderer. Phases of its secret life were revealed to Carl, little by little. Prodigality, from which mining camp was never yet exempt, was far more prevalent than seemed apparent at first view. For those susceptible to temptation this under life was a dangerous thing. For the strong its influence was negative, and the fine upper current was the manliest character-building power in the world. To do Carl justice, he classed himself as in the upper current. He had seen the evil of cities, and its presence here, he thought, would not affect him.

In accordance with his uncle's wishes Carl occupied the former's house, which was kept in charge of a Chinese servant, Mong Loo. Freeman, the foreman, had been staying there also, and Carl was glad of that. He found the boss good company, though not exactly a refined companion. However, that was not to be expected, since, as Freeman said, he had worked in mines

all his life. While engaged on Number Two Shaft the first day, he gave Carl a short account of his life in various parts, and the latter found it rather more interesting than their present task. He had never thought drilling so monotonous, and was glad when the day was done; but on the morrow, when they began to get signs of ore, he warmed to his occupation.

"You see," Freeman explained, "one never can tell where to strike it. In the likeliest looking spot you seldom get anything. Now look here! We are down twenty feet and have signs. We sank Number One fifty and hit nothing."

"What!" Carl gasped, "I—I thought Number One was completed."

"So it is," the boss grinned—"a dead hole! We'll run some drifts later, but there is no silver in sight yet."

"Will this be the same?"

"It looks better."

"Suppose it isn't!"

"We'll try Number Three."

"Where will you sink it?"

Freeman showed him the location. The three shafts formed a triangle in a wooded valley between some low bluffs. This constituted Jacob Graham's holding.

Carl realized his ignorance about mining in general, Cobalt in general, and Cobalt mines in particular. When word had come to him from his uncle that he had secured claims in Coleman township near the railway

route—claims which promised immense returns—Carl took for granted that there was nothing to be done but instal machinery, lift out the precious rock and ship it. That was why he had told so many that his uncle had struck it rich. Now that he was himself on the silver ground, things did not seem so clear; the riches were not lying in piles for the lifting. This property was right in the heart of the silver district. Everything promised well, but that could not dispel the uncertainty. Number One Shaft yielded no ore. The wealth was still to be unearthed. So Carl forgot everything in the project. From that moment he resolved to have the location in a condition that would be valuable when his uncle returned. The hazy dream of his with regard to it would be a strong reality. There was silver there, and he would find it. Therefore he threw himself body and soul into the work. Monotony and listlessness vanished. All alert and eager, his big form could be seen aiding, advising, engineering new trends, or following Freeman's plans with unfailing nicety of execution. Indeed, the foreman found it hard to hold the nephew, and there came a time very shortly when Carl understood what was to be done almost as well as Freeman, while the men looked to him as manager of everything.

Before two weeks ran out, the second shaft was down to nearly the depth of Number One. As they got deeper and deeper, Glover's high hopes grew fainter and at last ceased. This shaft was no better than the first.

Sick at heart, he knocked off work that Saturday night and discussed the situation with Freeman over their evening meal, served by the vivacious Mong Loo. Unknowingly the servant opened the subject Carl was most anxious about.

"Vellee much silver?" the Chinaman asked, after bringing in the soup.

Freeman slyly winked at Glover.

"Nice pile!" he said. "Got good mine, Mong!"

"Me heapee glad. Keepee me job with Mista Gl-a-a-m longee time."

"Yes, you're good for a year or two yet, Mong, if that opium pipe of yours doesn't kill you off."

Mong Loo grinned sheepishly, and half shut his almond eyes. "Me no smokee for two weeks," he said.

"That means you'll smoke for two solid weeks if you do start. See here, Mong, I'll flay you alive if you go off now when we are in the thick of this shaft business. Do you hear?"

"Me heareo. Me no smokee at all if Charlie Ling no come for me."

"By George, I'll break his bones if he comes sneaking round here. You see," he explained to Carl, when Mong had retired to the kitchen, "they have the habit here. This rascally laundryman, Charlie Ling, keeps all these Orientals smoking off and on, as well as some white fellows. Just before you came, Mong had a round of a full week, and he hasn't been out since. It plays

the dickens with the meals and housekeeping when they vamoose like that."

"Why did you misinform him about the mines?" Carl asked.

"Just as well not to let him know! Those things spread."

"People can't help but understand our condition."

"They don't know anything about it."

"Don't you ever have visitors?"

No. We are not on the market. When we are, the investors will come pottering about, but we will be ready for them then."

"How will you make ready?"

"We will have samples for them."

Carl shook his head despairingly. "It looks blue," he said.

"Well, we have more chances yet."

"I must give this thing more study," Carl said, with emphasis. "We simply have to win. I'll probe those mining manuals till midnight."

"Knock off for to-night!" Freeman advised. "You have pored over them all week. It is Saturday night, too, and all the boys will be in town. Come down and have a look round. Why," he added, on sudden thought, "you've never seen Cobalt by night. George! and you here a fortnight!"

It was true. Carl had been so bound up in his scheme to force success in the mining enterprise that he had given it all his thought and time. He worked all day,

and at night studied treatises on mining, seeking new ideas and fresh practices, and giving every scientific fibre of his keen brain to the mastering of the undertaking now before him. He felt rather fagged and was inclined to take a night off with Freeman in seeing the town. So when the foreman urged he consented.

On leaving the house, Freeman gave Mong Loo strict commands not to go away. "If Charlie Ling comes round," he admonished, "you tell him to make himself scarce or I'll have his pigtail to-morrow morning. Do you hear, Mong Loo?"

"Me hearee," said the Chinaman.

"And remember, too," was the last order. "We will be in at eleven."

"All litee," Mong Loo gurgled, and shut the door after them.

CHAPTER V.

The places of rendezvous for the miners at night were the hotels and tobacco stores, and these were about the only places where men of Freeman's class judged anything was to be seen; so they found themselves, after a short walk, during which the foreman did the piloting, opposite a certain saloon that was named Cobalt Clan, in part of which a blind pig was located.

"Ever drink?" Freeman asked, nodding toward its brilliantly lighted windows.

"Not at all," said Carl.

"Have a cigar, then?"

"Never smoke!" Carl said, again, half laughing.

"You don't? Why, I thought all college men smoked."

"Well, nearly all—but I am an exception."

"Queer!" Freeman commented. "I must get some weed, though, for to-morrow. Come along!"

They entered the Clan and found its sitting-room full of various types gathered from many camps. Silver was the prevailing topic for conversation. The smoke-saturated air held nothing but Hudson Bay, Foster, King, Crown Reserve, Trethewey, Silver Leaf, Nipissing, Contact, and so on. Merits of one location, deficiencies of

another, shares, companies, directors, stock, investment, all formed a babel of sound as voiced by men talking in pairs, threes, or larger groups.

Comparatively unknown, Carl passed a greeting with but a few whose acquaintance he had made, and, while waiting for Freeman, fell into conversation with Ridgeley, an owner on the shore of a little lake two miles out. Carl had met him before, and eagerly inquired how he was progressing.

"Fine!" was Ridgeley's answer. "We have three veins uncovered. Good native silver, too! How is yours?"

"Not much reward yet," said Carl.

"How many shafts have you sunk?"

"Two."

"How deep?"

"Fifty feet."

"Any signs?"

"There were fair signs on Number Two, but we haven't found any veins."

"Ever have any experience before?"

"No! I'm absolutely new, but Freeman's a practical man."

Robert Ridgeley winked a knowing eye at Carl.

"Sure?" he inquired.

"He is my uncle's choice as boss. He ought to be all right."

"Well," said the mine owner, lighting a cigar, "I have my opinion."

"What is it?" asked Carl.

"Candid?"

"Candid!"

"He isn't worth his salt."

Carl stared.

"You see," Ridgeley went on, "I know a mining man when I see him at work. I've seen this Freeman down in Arkansas at the lead and zinc game, and I've seen him here, before you came. Take my word—he's a figurehead!"

"But how," Carl objected, "how did he get on foreman with uncle?"

"Can't say," Ridgeley answered, with what Carl thought was studied indifference.

"And it is up to me, an inexperienced man, to develop the place?" he said, rather anxiously.

"Help is scarce. You can't get a boss or even a hand for months yet. I am two men short myself. All you can do is to peg along. When will Graham be fit?"

"Four or six weeks yet."

"Hem! Better go ahead the way you are doing till he can take control. I wouldn't advise bouncing the foreman on your own hook. Anyway, you can't get another just at this season. Besides, you have a blind chance of striking it."

"Stone blind," Carl said, bitterly.

"Look here!" Ridgeley said, suddenly conceiving what failure meant to a man of Glover's calibre. "I'll look over this place with you. Say we take a walk through it to-morrow?"

"Thanks! we will," the nephew assented. "Freeman will object, but he can go on objecting."

"Very well. I shall come round early. Good-night!" Ridgeley went out to seek his lodging near by, for he was a keen business man of strictly temperate habits.

Carl looked for his foreman. The latter was not in sight, but Giles, the proprietor, said he had just gone into the billiard-room.

"If you are Mr. Glover," Giles ventured, "I am glad to see you. I know your uncle well.

"Ah! I suppose you were both among the first here?"

"Yes. You have been up but a short time?"

"Two weeks. I am trying to manage till my uncle gets back to form."

"I wish you luck, Mr. Glover. It is rather an upsetting of his plans and a new duty for you, I presume. Still, you are fortunate in having such an excellent foreman as Freeman. Oh, yes! you were wanting him. Come this way! He went in for a game with one of the Dolly Varden men."

Freeman was not to be seen in the billiard-room, but the proprietor led him along a narrow hallway and opened a panel in the wall. It swung, upon pressing a certain point. The sight that met Carl Glover's eyes was one to amaze him. Here was a miniature Monte Carlo fitted up in a cleverly disguised part of the hotel. The game was in full swing. Women as well as men crowded round the long tables, staking their faith and

earnings on the red or black. In luxury of appointment this place was one to extend a strong invitation. The upholstering, fretwork, paneling, decorating, gilding of ceiling, and carpeting of floor was so done as to blend in a harmony of colors. The animated, well-dressed assembly gave out an aspect of cordiality and good social feeling that was hard to resist. It was like Paris after the mine and shaft-house. Carl felt an uncontrollable desire to enter just to enjoy being with the throng, and when his host touched his arm and went in before as if taking for granted that Glover knew the hall existed, he followed without intimating that he saw it for the first time.

"I don't see him here, either," Giles said. "He must have gone out altogether. However, you can pass an hour among the gathering. You know some, do you not, or shall I introduce you?"

"No, no; don't trouble, thanks! I'll make out. Some I know."

"You will find them all agreeable. We believe in sociability up here in Cobalt. I must leave you, though, for I have a few matters which need attention before closing. You are sure you will be quite content?"

"Quite," Carl answered. "I shall watch the flights of chance."

"Do you never play?"

Carl shook his head and edged through the crowd where he could get a clearer view of the tables.

Luck seemed to favor the public, and they were caus-

ing a heavy run on the bank. One English capitalist was trying his utmost to take everything they had just for the triumph of it, then he would lend them funds to begin afresh. While Carl watched, he very nearly succeeded, but suddenly luck changed in a most unaccountable manner, and he was back again where he started. It was now the bank's turn to win, and several dropped away, having tried their last dollar without result. The sight of the green cloth littered with gold, paper money, bank notes, and even silver nuggets, was fascinating. Carl threaded in closer still until he could command a view of the whole stretch of tables.

"By all the gods, if here isn't The Prince," said a loud voice at his right. "Hello, Prince! Good Lord, it's a long time since I saw you! Shake!"

Carl turned and recognized Whitmore, who had failed to finish his college courses at the time Carl himself was attending. Whitmore had never been held in high esteem by the college men, and was always looked upon as being a little shady. Rumor said it was something of this nature which had cut short his academic career, but Glover was unwilling to trump up any past reason for not being civil to an old classmate, and he shook hands with ready grace.

"It seems I run into Varsity men everywhere, he laughed.

"Can't keep them down! No, by the Lord, you can't. Didn't ever expect to meet you here, though, Prince! Have you got the fever, too?"

"Yes. I'm trying to help my uncle out by acting as temporary manager. He is laid up in the hospital!"

"Heavens, yes! That smash at South River. They say he has a good thing in mines here. Is that your sit?"

"Yes, developing as fast as my experience will permit?"

"Turning out rich?"

"Well, not so far. I fancy I am to blame. I shall be glad when uncle gets out. Things will boom then. The place is rich, no doubt, but we haven't found the veins."

Whitmore jerked a hand toward the tables. "Easier mining silver here," he chuckled—"and gold, too!"

"Perhaps for you, but not for me!"

"Never play?"

"Never in my life!"

"Come and try a hand! I'll put you onto the kinks."

"No," said Carl, "it's against my principles."

"Fudge! It is square."

"It is purely chance."

"Like everything else in this world! A man takes his chance against everybody. Why not here?"

"Entirely different!"

"How?"

"In purpose."

"Explain, please," Whitmore said, with a good-natured laugh.

"It's too obvious. Life pits you against many a man, and you take your chance on the uphill fight, but every effort made is one for ennoblement, the satisfying of high ideals and worthy ambitions. Here you chance your money and time for the sake of a passion."

"And gain nothing?"

"Nothing but more passion."

Whitmore looked at him through the haze of his cigar smoke. "By gad! Prince," he said, "you're the same out-and-out chap. Never a change. You always had principles—and some of us, well—had none."

"Where have you been since you quit?" Carl asked, his voice softer, half out of pity.

"Wandering," Whitmore said, bitterly, "wandering God knows where. When a man's cast out without a show, even on his own fault, the devil sticks mighty close. I have been all over the States and Europe. Landed back in old Canada a month or so ago. Lived like this," he added, nodding toward the roulette.

Glover looked at him for a minute, then before he could make any comment a finely modulated feminine voice came across the table. "I never saw you refrain so long before, Mr. Whitmore," it said.

Both men looked up. "Ah! Miss Theodore," Carl's companion said, "it is you. The truth is, I have been renewing an old acquaintance. Allow me to introduce a former classmate, Mr. Glover, better known as 'The Prince.'"

"What a delightful sobriquet!" the dark beauty trilled, greeting Carl with a rare smile.

"Nothing but a campus slander," he said, lightly, with an effort to keep back his laughter.

"And a true one I can vouch for," Whitmore declared. "You see, Miss Theodore, it was football. That's his outdoor forte. He—"

"That's sufficient," Carl jokingly interrupted. "Write it out, Whitmore, or print it and give it to Miss Theodore to read at her leisure. If I mistake not she is engaged just now."

She had laid some gold pieces on the green cloth, about to wager them on *rouge et noir*. Carl had heard of the refined female patrons of Monte Carlo, but it was his thought at this moment that they could hardly be any more refined, aristocratic, graceful or attractive than the lady of the gamester's paradise suddenly unveiled to him in the midst of a gaunt, outlying mining camp. They moved round to her side to watch the issue.

Red turned and she won. A second time, a third, and a fourth. Her delight sparkled out in musical mirth.

"The little gods of fortune are kind to me to-night," she smilingly said to Glover, looking to him with upturned face. Carl was struck with its perfect symmetry and color. "Perhaps they will be as considerate to you," she continued, "and you shall use one of the same coins, for good luck."

"Thank you," Glover said, "but I never play."

Miss Theodore raised her eyebrows in surprise. "Have you never played?" she asked.

"Never."

"Won't you try now?" The smile was full of sweet persuasion.

"It is most embarrassing to refuse a lady anything, but, really, I cannot. It is a matter of principle with me."

"And you refuse me?" She laid the coin upon the edge, almost at his hand.

"No, I don't refuse you. I refuse my other self. I cannot play."

"You remind me of Shakespeare," the lady mused, devoting herself to the game once more. "Did you ever act?"

"Never. I have not the talent."

"Are you not inclined to art?"

"I do a little on canvas, a very little. The atmosphere of the camp wilds I sometimes feel as a wonderful inspiration, but I have no materials in which to utilize the power. Coming in haste as I did, that was one of the farthest things from my mind."

"I do amateur work myself," Miss Theodore said. "I have plenty of material. You are quite welcome to use as much of it as you want. There are, truthfully, some magnificent landscapes in Temiskaming."

"A thousand thanks," Carl said, "I shall be very,

very much indebted, after wishing for that one thing all these days."

She twisted away from the game, for it had turned to her loss thrice in succession.

"You have angered the gods," she said, in mock pettishness. "They left me after your refusal, and I am tired. I wonder if there is a seat left."

He found an empty divan in a small alcove, and they rested there. Carl ordered coffee for two. Whitmore had disappeared some time previous. As they sipped their drink the talk ran on over art and its various phases, college life, travel, literature—everything, in fact, but Cobalt. Jointly they seemed to forget that they were in Cobalt. All Carl knew was that a beautiful woman was beside him in an entrancing little alcove. Somehow she exerted a spell over him. It was not love. He knew that. Yet some hidden power drew him, something which made him vaguely uneasy because of its mystery. Vague uneasiness, however, and mystery, both made the *tête-à-tête* more delicious, and it was with regret, when a thin, elderly man approached, that she said: "My father! I must go now."

Carl looked at his watch. "Eleven!" he exclaimed. "I didn't dream I was keeping you so long, although it has been a great pleasure. Can you forgive?"

"Freely," she answered, "the pleasure has been mutual. My father, Mr. Glover—he knows your uncle."

"Why, yes," Colonel Theodore said—"for years! Painful accident of his, in which he has my full sympathy! Excuse my brevity, Mr. Glover, but I am an hour later than I should have been, and I have some business letters to attend to before morning. Come and see us. We shall be glad to see you often. Your uncle and I come from the old land, the same old English soil. Call any time when I happen to be at leisure, and I warn you I am then inconsiderately garrulous. Rita, are you ready?"

"Quite ready," her soft tones assented. "We shall expect you, Mr. Glover."

"Thank you, yes," Carl bowed. "It will be a great privilege."

The last thing he saw that night in the Clan was her smile. The first thing to enter his brain at morning was her name—Rita.

CHAPTER VI.

Freeman was not at breakfast, and Carl was pleased with the fact. He ate lightly and hastily, then hurried away to find Ridgeley in order to go over the ground with him. The mine owner he met coming out from his lodging, so they walked briskly toward Graham's property. The Sabbath morning was bright with sunshine. Its level rays coming down over the bluffs threw the calm valley air into slanting planes of gold. Woodfolk called from deep haunts on all sides as they did at every week's end, since then no clamouring noise crashed out to cause them to hide in lair or rift.

"Pretty! pretty!" Ridgeley commented on reaching the spot.

"Magnificent," Carl said. "It is worth something just to have the mature richness of it."

They went to the shaft houses. Ridgeley examined the shafts, ground and dumps, while Carl waited expectantly.

"Hem!" the mine owner said at the first, "no signs. How deep did you say?"

"Fifty feet."

"You might go deeper. Run any drifts here?"

"Not yet."

"There might be some chance, but rather slight."

Number Two shaft was no better. Robert Ridgeley pronounced it very uncertain, and Carl knew his experience and reputation were such as to make his opinion valuable.

"You have done well, though," Ridgeley assured the nephew. "The development is above the average, especially on Number Two. That's when you came on, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Carl, with a thrill of exultation.

"Better work! Have you studied mining?"

"Only some manuals since I came here."

"Pretty exact. Much more so than Freeman's work. By the way, where is he?"

"I haven't seen him since last night."

"Well," Ridgeley said, "go on with your third shaft. That is my advice. The chances are against you, but go ahead as your uncle told you. Go ahead till he comes. Then get out!"

"What!"

"Get out!" Ridgeley repeated. "I'm convinced this is a wildcat. Don't get angry," he said, seeing the red flush into Carl's face. "Mr. Glover, I'm a plain man, and I always state my thoughts in a blunt, unvarnished way. I am not trying to insult you or throw any reflection on your uncle's business ventures. You asked my opinion, and I gave it. This is a wildcat. It makes no difference to me whether you develop it or not. Suppose it is shady, intentional, a

fixed plan to water the stock and do the public, it makes no difference to me. Only, I like to see a square deal."

"You insinuate, then," Carl said, with sudden dignity, "that my uncle is aware of its real value."

"I insinuate nothing, young man. I have been in the mining game for fifty years, and there isn't any part of it unknown to me. There is nothing to be gained by insinuating, knocking, or blackmailing anyone's holdings. Wherever there are mining properties there are wildcats. Take this Cobalt country all through. There aren't above a score of valuable claims in all, with a capitalization of about fifty millions. When you count the entire capitalization it aggregates two hundred millions. Look at the amount of money staked for which returns are decidedly uncertain. These places are boomed, boomed to the public. My God! Glover, don't you know there are professional boomers in this very camp, paid to keep various stocks on the upward run? It is done to-day. It's been done always, everywhere. I don't say your uncle's property is being developed in that way, but it looks suspicious. Ground poor, foreman a rascal, an inexperienced man put in to take charge! What have you to say regarding that?"

"I respect your scientific views, Mr. Ridgeley," Carl answered, rather constrainedly, "but I cannot entertain any suspicions against my uncle. If you knew what he has done for me!"

"A man might do everything for his own blood, but be a vampire on the public. How much does the average business man care for the public? As much as he can get dollars out of it! You've seen life, Glover, and you know the claws."

"Taking for granted, then, that this is valueless, my work for the next four weeks will amount to nothing. Good encouragement, that!"

"Practice; it will be the best of practice and will stand you in good stead should you ever need to do the like again; the best of training, in fact. I appreciate your work so much that I am prepared to take you on as assistant to one of my foremen should you care to leave your uncle's service when he takes charge."

"Thank you! I am much gratified. I had no idea I had made such headway."

"I feel sorry you have been put into a delicate position. It is probably just as well that you should know the camp looks upon your property as in the 'cat' class; there is no discredit to you, however."

"Does Freeman know this?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And he is simply putting in time to draw his pay?"

"Exactly, or perhaps he is in on the game."

"I decline to recognize any game."

"You will get your eyes opened before you have been in Cobalt a year. Take up any daily paper, and you will find columns upon columns of wildcat advertising at fifteen cents, twenty, fifty cents a share, with an

engineer's report, list of directors, summary of development made, etcetera, etcetera. Get up with your own feet on the silver ground, and there isn't a blessed stick in sight where these paper mines are placed. Search those same papers, and you won't find the Ridgeley mines blocked out in mammoth letters. No, by my honor, they don't need a well of ink and a mountain of type to voice their worth. They are known to real investors, and they stand right here in substance before all comers."

"But," Carl objected, "once they are developed they invite inspection."

"Certainly. The ore-house is stocked with ore, or there are cars on the track with perhaps some shipping being done. Do you know where it is got?"

"No."

"Shipped in! Bought by the syndicate behind the scheme! Two or three cars is plenty, for it is no sooner shipped out than it is returned again."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Carl, "and can't the people see through this thing?"

"The people are blind. The fields to them are mythical, dream-like, laden with riches for the picking up. Each one's mine is the reliable newspaper he gazes upon in his comfortable cushioned chair, pipe in mouth and feet upon the hearth. A few dollars will make him wealthy in the way he conjures up the picture. Hark! young man, fortunes were never made that way. Not by a long sight! Pin your faith to

the man who starves out on the ridges and lone stretches with short rations and stony lodgings. Stake your dollars on the man who slaved and fought his way to the silver veins. Then you have a miner, and a mine!"

Carl could not help but be convinced by the sincerity of Ridgeley's words, backed by his reputation. "But there might be a chance," he said, despairingly.

"True! there is a chance. Something is often struck accidentally in a wildcat. Some of the finest mines to-day started out as that. However, that doesn't change the principle of the thing. Should they pan out rich, the stock is bought back, and former shareholders never get it. First they water their stock; then they drain it dry when fertile spots are discovered, and the syndicate reaps the harvest. Was your uncle rich, Mr. Glover?"

"Not before he made this strike."

"Will you show me what has made him rich since?"

Carl could not answer, and Robert Ridgeley continued. "He hasn't got a dollar from his mines. Instead of that it has taken thousands of dollars to carry on the developing that has been done, and it will take thousands more. From where is the money coming?"

The question was as unanswerable as the last.

Despite his fixed resolve never to entertain the thought that his uncle, the uncle who had cherished his young life, was involved in a scheme of this nature,

Carl felt the evidence was indisputable. Everything pointed that way. The only saving element would be the belief of real value in the property. His uncle might have faith in it, might think the moneyed men, whoever they might be, had the same opinion, and were backing him for that reason. This was the saving hope, and Carl clung to it. Jacob Graham must be the tool of others, being innocently involved.

"I judge," Ridgeley said, interrupting the nephew's thoughts, "that it is a veteran acquirement."

"Yes, a reward for service—real service it was, Mr. Ridgeley—in the Fenian raid. As chance had it the farm happened to be right in the heart of the silver district. When one was struck in this vicinity, he waited. Mines sprang up all round, some of them now the richest. Then, when there was no reason to doubt but his claims would carry the same riches as neighbouring ones, he came on to develop. You know the rest."

"Well, it is too bad, but I am afraid it is worthless. Wildcats are having a great outing this spring."

While they parted after leaving the mine, Carl said: "I am confident that my uncle believes his claims are wealthy. If they are not, he is unwittingly being used as a tool."

"I have neither the ability nor the wish to discuss that point with you," was Ridgeley's reply.

However, had Carl known where Freeman was at the time, and his errand, he would not have felt quite so

sure. As it was, one explanation was given him later. A letter which Mong Loo had forgotten to give him in the morning was from the foreman. He had suddenly decided to run down to see the uncle about some points concerning the third shaft, and would be back immediately.

CHAPTER VII.

If Carl could have looked into Ward Six, where his uncle lay in the hospital at North Bay, at the precise moment he was reading Freeman's letter, and heard the conversation carried on, he would have shaped his course for the after months quite differently.

"I tell you," Freeman was saying, "he'll raise the dickens."

"And I tell you for the twentieth time he will not," said the man on the bed. "I have stood by him in everything for years and he will stand by me in this."

"Anything that fellow stands by must be square!" the foreman emphatically answered, pounding an invalid's table with one big fist.

"How do you know this will not pan out all right? We have a chance of striking it yet."

"Deuced poor chance."

"Why in the world did you put your shafts so deep till I came back?"

"What was I to do? That hasty nephew of yours would have had them twice the depth if he'd been alone. I had the dickens of a job to hold him. Number Three shaft is ready to sink now, and what have we done? No company formed, the place not boomed, nothing

done! By the stars, we'll put all our little money into it; they'll spy it out for an empty spot, and that's the end—we're done!"

"Freeman," the uncle said, "I always had the hope there was good silver."

"Never a hope! All there ever was lay in the two spider veins upon which we started the shafts. We have that ore safe enough, but how much is it?—a few hundred dollars. The veins pinched out, and the blessed shafts might go through to China and never see a five-cent lump. We must get this company formed and the thing floated. We've development enough to bluff all comers. How soon can you get out?"

"Four weeks yet till I get on crutches."

"By George! The Prince will have that third shaft down twenty feet or so. See, Graham, we have to stop. Send him up word not to begin the third till you come."

"I guess you're right, Freeman."

"Certainly! We can't go on like this."

"You can build some ore sheds. That will occupy the time. They'll have to be ready when we form. Did you see Richmond about that ore?"

"Yes, he has it all bagged, handy to ship in just when we want it. By the stars, things are just ripe if you were only out."

"I wonder," Graham observed, thoughtfully, "if Giles couldn't go on and form."

"Not on your life!" Freeman burst out. "You're the man to handle that nephew. Nobody else can, and

bless me if I haven't my doubts about your being able to. He'll raise a dickens of a mess, even if he doesn't quit."

"He will stay with me," Graham repeated. "Besides, we have always the chance, you know."

"I got so anxious that I couldn't wait any longer," the boss said. "The Prince has been nosing around with Ridgeley, too. That made me worse, so I thought I would light right down. If he gets Ridgeley's views on the wildcat proposition, there'll be the deuce to pay. Ridgeley knows Cobalt and the game. I'm certain he looks on your claim as one of the wildest wildcats in camp."

"Well, well," the old uncle irascibly commented, "do what you can, and don't bother me any more. We will shape it all in two weeks. Get those houses up. I have no more to say. Oh, yes," he added; "Carl doesn't try to break The Clan?"

"Giles says he won't play," Freeman answered. "He was in the other night. Theodore was there, too, and your nephew met his daughter. Say, Graham, I've been thinking there is where we might get a hold."

"How?"

"Why, he'll fall in love with her."

"I don't know as Carl will. He never leaned that way. Why?"

"Can't you see? He may fall in love with her so that she can twist him round her little finger. She could persuade him to go into this company, or at least keep still. When she tells him her father is in it, he

can't give the thing away. By George! that's the hold we'll have. I tell you he can't keep his head when she's around. None of them can, except old fogeys like us. That is our strong point. We can't throw him out now or we would. I don't know what possessed you to bring him up anyway."

"Well," Graham tartly commented, "when a man finds himself smashed up in a railway wreck, he naturally doesn't know how badly he is hurt. I didn't know but what I was all in. That's why I sent for him. He gets those acres in Cobalt after I die, you see, and I wanted to make sure he wouldn't be done. I can't altogether trust you fellows."

"Ah!" Freeman said, with an ugly smile, "yet we are all partners."

"In a sense! I own the mine. We have all invested an equal sum—we are partners in the profit. That doesn't affect the fact of my ownership, though. Any time I like to have the place myself, or run it on a different line, I am free to do so."

"And you were afraid we would pinch the Graham eldorado on him?"

"Exactly! You remember the case of that zinc property you filched in Arizona and the other man's claims you took at the base of the big Selkirks."

Freeman's eyes dilated, half in anger, half in surprise. "What do you know of that?" he snarled.

"I know enough," the uncle snapped, meaningly. "Just remember you can't play any game on me. We're

in this thing to share evenly, but my claim won't be snatched by underhand work. I'm not trying to preach to you, Freeman, only I wanted to show you why I sent for the Prince."

"And now the Old Boy himself won't get rid of him," was the foreman's parting remark.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Freeman returned the next day, bringing written word from the uncle not to do any more shaft work, Carl hardly knew whether he felt glad or sorry. Had he carefully analyzed his feeling, it would perhaps have been gladness. It meant more leisure, for he was seldom needed at the building of the sheds. Cobalt for him had suddenly been invested with a new interest —Rita Theodore. Their common artistic temperament naturally drew them together. Carl, at the very first opportunity, took occasion to visit the Theodores' Cobalt home. It reminded him strangely of the Orient. From the outside none would have guessed such luxurious fittings adorned the interior. The Colonel was not in when he called, so Rita and Carl repaired to the studio to enjoy their common hobby—painting—and also to examine her work. Carl found the little room, on the lightest side of the house, arranged to perfection.

"It is exquisite," he said, taking in every detail, "you must have inspiration here."

"Ah! I dream here," she answered, going to the window and standing with her splendid figure and face moulded purely into the light. "Yonder is where the inspiration comes—out by the gorge and bluff and wild north water. Is it not true?"

"True," Carl answered, marvelling at her perfect beauty. "Nature in art is like blood in man. It is the pulse and life."

"Yet some great artistic triumphs have matured within the grey walls of prisons."

"But through men who have stored the world in their hearts before the bars shut in their bodies."

She turned to him from the window. "Shall we go out?" she said. "The sun is so bright. Do you think you can still use a water-color after the pick and shovel?"

"I might make a poor attempt," he laughed, "but it will be a delight to watch you. This work of yours on the walls is really fine. I should be almost afraid to have you look at mine."

"You shall bring yours to show me. They will not be as delicate, but they will be far above mine in one thing."

"And what is that?" Carl inquired.

"Strength!"

"How can you tell that?"

"I cannot tell, but I know."

"You will be disappointed, I am afraid."

"No," she declared, decisively; "I shall not." Then she laughed in bell-like tones at her emphasis.

"Come," she commanded, with a thrill of animation, "we shall paint that bluff. See! just where the sun lines the green with the gorge."

"Agreed!" Carl said. "Let us hurry, or the rays

will have left the crags. Your shadows would then be too heavy."

"Ah!" the girl exclaimed, with a searching smile, "I see you understand art."

"A little," he admitted.

"As well as mining?" she interrogated.

"Very little better."

"Do you know what I heard a person say yesterday?"

"How could I?"

"He said Glover knew more about mining than half the engineers in Cobalt."

Carl started. He thought she must be joking, but a sharp look assured him the girl was in earnest.

"Who?" he asked.

"That wouldn't be fair."

"Is he a miner?"

"Well—yes."

"Ridgeley?" Carl guessed.

She laughed in assent. "You are very, very keen," she said.

"It must be your influence that has sharpened my wits to-day, then, for I have been stupidly dull all week."

"Why do they call you 'The Prince'?" she inquired, rather irrelevantly.

"College nickname."

"Any reason?"

"As much as they have for the most of them. I've forgotten when they first gave it to me. Ha! here

is your bluff. Beautiful light! Be quick, now. Set your board here. This stone will do for a seat. The moss is not so hard. One minute! wait till the rays clear that fringe. Now they bathe the gray. Quick!"

She looked up with a laugh of satisfaction at his imperative mood. Then she fell to work with a will, silently mingling her colors. Unlike some, she never talked except in monosyllables when she painted.

Glover lay back in a nook of the big rocks and watched her. "George!" he caught himself saying, "but she is perfect!" The lithe figure, sitting like a sculptor's masterpiece on the rocky throne, was formed as finely as some Greek ideal. All the flesh wealth of perfect feature was harmonized with a thoughtful, earnest expression as she bent her head slightly over the board. He was not in love, he told himself, but something drew him, some indefinable, subtle thing. He had felt it that night in The Clan perhaps stronger than now, yet, try as he might, he could not define it.

The last long sunset light left the crags that Rita Theodore was painting. She sat back with a little sigh.

"There, Mr. Critic," she said, mirthfully. "What is your judgment?"

Glover looked at it. "Good," he commented, "shadow just a shade deep. Where'd you get that yellow in the crags here?"

"I forget. It was among the rest. I hardly could tell where or how long I have had it."

"It lacks life. A lighter yellow would have made a big difference."

"You are very harsh," she softly appealed, but somehow her tone was not of disappointment. She seemed to be pleased.

"No," he objected, "only just! Now, the gorge and river are splendid. You may have been right about your lack of strength. The cliff seems weak. Lend me your brush!"

To the girl's surprise, he calmly painted out her cliff, and with a few deft strokes ran in a bold, strong pile of crag, true to nature as the original, even to the shreds of falling moss.

Miss Theodore's dark eyes were filled with a glow of admiration as she looked full into his. Confused by their brilliancy, Carl tried to glance aside, but some magnetic spell held him. The power of her look was indescribable, unaccountable. He could see in that instant her thought was not on the sketch.

Struck by sudden shame at his childishness, he dashed a hand before his eyes. Then he put the paper in her grasp.

"You have the gift, the great gift," she said, quietly. A strange but tremulous indecision seemed to have come over her. The gleam in her eyes was far, far away when she rose to go. "Come!" was all she said.

Carl gathered the things and they turned homeward while the night shadows crept down from the north, settling first in the gorge.

CHAPTER IX.

The weeks that followed were strangely and fatefully woven for Carl. The mystic something which drew him to this girl of the north grew stronger and stronger. He found himself more and more in her company, more days in the great, free wood, rock and waterway; more evenings in the dreamy studio or the reading-room of hers just beyond. That reading-room, with its mental luxury of furnishing, struck one as strange, even ridiculous, in a wild mining town up in the lone Temiskaming stretch. But whether ridiculous or not, it was a little heaven to Carl. There was the sense of sunny southern surroundings about it. It made the mind dwell upon soft Mediterranean nights, with Venice in the starry glow of sky and water, shadowy gondolas stealing under sombre arches; perhaps a low, sweet, passionate serenade to thrill to flame a heart already glowing with the soul-thralling beauty of the sun realm. Its perfume awakened a picture of long purple hills pouring arbors of wine grapes down each low-set plain. It sent the thoughts to the Grecian isles, a million isles cast in an historic east.

What could be more ludicrous? Nevertheless he could not shake the feeling, and the woman before him

might have been some eastern goddess. Her face was southern, rich and warm; her hair was the tint of night clouds, even as deep as the purple grapes on the uplands of Arretium. She charmed Carl's thoughts.

There was nothing to hold him at work, and he was glad. He was not in love, he told himself; only it pleased him, thrilled him, conquered him, to be with her. Her father, Colonel Theodore, was busy looking after mining investments, of which Carl heard he had many, so that the two young people were left alone constantly.

One thing which surprised him was her impulse. Sometimes she would suddenly plan a walk, a painting expedition, a canoe jaunt through the lakes, upon the instant the thought occurred to her. This amused him, too, and he sometimes remonstrated and took command of her, making her fall in with his arrangements. That especially seemed to please her.

"Do you know," she said one day when Carl had come to take her canoeing, and she had wished on a sudden impulse to explore the bluffs on the ridge away to the east, where grew great cushioned mosses and clinging rock ferns, with which she loved to decorate her windows, "that you are the first man I have met who dared to order me about?"

"Perhaps it is because of my strength."

"No, it is something else. And the odd part of it is that I submit so gracefully. I must be losing courage."

"Were the others too timid?"

"They seemed to think the proper place was at my feet."

"You were accustomed to being queen, then?"

"Absolutely!"

"And here?"

"You make me feel like a schoolgirl."

"Impossible!" Carl ejaculated, in feigned consternation. "Am I such a tyrant, then—a sort of master spirit?"

"You are the ruling power—The Prince, you know."

"I have no intention of being arbitrary."

"But you have"—the dark eyes mocked. They were in the canoe now, skirting the shore of the lake, where the air was laden with the scent of pine and fir.

"Shall I evacuate the throne?" There was deep meaning in his tone.

She looked up sharply, with eyes just a trifle serious. "Your uncle is well, then?" she said.

"Yes. He is on crutches yet, though. He comes to-morrow."

There was no reply. The girl appeared to be waiting for him to continue.

"The tyrant may then be deposed," Carl went on.

"You mean you are going?"

"Yes, unless my uncle insists on my staying."

"You know you have done well along the mining line. Why do you not follow it up?"

"My failing for art, I suppose."

"Do you intend to cultivate it?"

"I may in the future."

"You should. You have the strength, the great gift of art—then," with a smile, "you are so tyrannical."

"Cruel!" he tossed at her.

"Does it wound very, very much?"

"I shall always remember it."

"In pain?"

"No, with pleasure. Pain is often a pleasure."

"And pleasure a pain."

"We are getting phrases confused," Carl said, letting the canoe drift idly. It was the middle of summer, and Temiskaming flaunted forth all its gipsy beauty.

"Then our thoughts must be," the girl asserted.

"They may be."

"One thing, however, is clear."

"And that?"

"Is that you have been the Prince here. I have been —the page."

CHAPTER X.

THE following day they were again in the canoe, enjoying the graceful motion of the red man's craft. The conversation again turned to the subject of yesterday. Rita chanced to remark that the Prince's page should not be asked to make decisions.

Carl studied her face. A sudden idea dawned upon him. Perhaps she was secretly hiding reproaches under her words. Had he been selfish in their companionship? A suspicion of ungentlemanliness sent a hot surge of shame over him.

"If I have been so selfish as to have ever thwarted your real wishes, I most humbly apologize," he began.

She interrupted. "Don't, don't be humble," she said, almost breathlessly. "Don't be humble. I will hate you then. Be the tyrant and—The Prince."

"I have offended you in some way."

"No, I mean what I said. Be imperative. I like it."

"Then you do not care to be the queen, with hands, hearts and lives thrown at your feet."

"Never," she answered. "There are softer things for the feet to tread."

"That is true, very true," Carl said, in a voice of

admiration, "though some would rather have that pathway than one of roses."

Rita Theodore glanced at him, a half frightened expression in her eyes.

"Your words are full of meaning," she observed. "Forgive me, but your own may have lain with the roses?"

"I know some that have, but not my own. That has never been trampled on—or touched."

A great light flamed up in the dark eyes. It was well Carl was looking out over the still lake surface and did not see, or that next moment had been one of inexplicable embarrassment.

"I sometimes wonder which is the greater," Rita said, in eager tones, "the sorrow of the world or its joy —I mean real joy. Take the sorrow of all broken hearts and set it against the joy of the joyous, which would be the greater?"

"I cannot say," Carl mused; "some hearts hold sorrow a hundredfold deeper than others, and some hold joy in the same way."

"What is the true joy?"

"Love."

"That is your real belief?"

"Undoubtedly! What is anything else in all the round earth when compared with it?"

"And what is the real sorrow?"

"Sin."

"Then we all have real sorrow?"

"All! And more than we need. You have more than you need," Carl burst out in sudden emotion. "Oh! why will you chance gold pieces over the gaming table? Perhaps I shouldn't speak, but I must. You are too beautiful, too young, too perfectly fashioned, too cultured and refined, to throw yourself into such a sin. Yes, it is a sin! Oh! why do you do it? What do you get? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing! You who can paint an angel's face from the treasure room of your heart, can draw music almost divine from the chords of your soul and echo it out from the keys of your instrument, why, why will you do it?"

Startled by his vehemence, she caught her breath, and the red flushed over the oval face.

"I never looked at it as that," she said, recovering her composure. "I had always done it. Why, everyone bets in every country of the globe. I've seen it done and have done it everywhere."

"But it's wrong—wrong!" Carl declared.

"It is chance, only a fair chance," she defended.

"It is gambling money, soul, virtue, heart and all other attributes in one. Oh! I wish you would stop it. You know you are so beautiful, so very, very beautiful."

It was the first time he had ever told her that. His words were not a lover's words, though. They were of earnest pleading.

"Will you?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"If you care for yourself," he went on, "if you care for anyone in this world, do! Will you promise?"

"It would do no good," she protested. "I might do it the very next time. I am weak, you know. I always told you I lacked strength. You are so strong." Her words were fraught with pain.

Carl made a gesture of defeat. "You will not?"

"It is useless."

"Will you ever cease doing it?"

"For one thing."

"What is it?"

"I cannot tell you."

"For one thing in this world you would?"

"At a certain time."

"I don't understand," Carl exclaimed, impatiently.

"Should a certain thing come to pass in my life, then I know I could give it up freely and fully."

"What is it?" he demanded.

"I cannot say."

"Is it strength?"

"In a sense, yes. More than that."

"You are unfathomable," Glover said, dipping his paddle once more. He examined her expression and cursed himself for his outburst. There was such a drawn, pained look about the eyes. What right had he to criticize anyone's actions? Now that he saw how it hurt, the fault did not seem so great. It was only a little fault of hers, just as many of his own. There came into his soul a great pity for the girl, and his

heart was nearer being touched at that moment than at any other time in her presence. He pondered on what she had said. She could overcome it if a certain thing should come to pass. What was it? He could not think, and paddled in silence. From her listless and pensive attitude he knew she would not speak, so they retraced their course the length of the lake without exchanging a word. By the point where they had embarked, he drew the canoe up on the rocky shore and placed himself beside her to walk to her home.

"Did I hurt you?" he asked, simply.

"A little, perhaps justly."

"How can I ask forgiveness? I should never have forgotten myself."

"You need not ask," the sweet voice assured.

"How?"

"You are forgiven before you ask."

"You are so tender," Carl said, with deep feeling—"and I am so boorish—"

"You are The Prince," she murmured, in interruption.

"And you should be a princess or a queen."

"To set an example of strength and excellence," his companion said, bitterly.

"Don't, don't!" Carl pleaded. "You make me feel as if I were saying it. Tell me you will forget that."

"I will never forget it. You showed me my fault too plainly. It will take a little from the joy side

and add it to the sorrow. You mustn't regret it, though."

"I am a beastly cad."

He opened the porch door for her, when they had come to the steps.

"You are coming in?" she said.

"I would like it," Carl answered, "but uncle will be here to-morrow, and I have some of the men's accounts to square up so that he can see everything for himself when he arrives. So I must finish it to-night. Do you know you have commanded almost all my time these last few weeks? There!" he exclaimed, checking himself—"I am rudeness personified."

"Do you regret it?" He could not understand the tone.

"No, no, I didn't mean that. I just meant to say I had been with you much. It was all on the joy side, as you say."

"Then it has been a mutual pleasure. We talk as if it were all over," she added, with a nervous laugh. "Are you going or not?"

"I cannot say till uncle comes. If I go, I shall go at once. Do you intend to stay here very long?"

"Till father has his investments soundly placed! He likes to be on the ground and see for himself. He says that is the only way to invest."

"I shall know to-morrow, and I shall see you then if I go."

"Yes," she said.

The night had fallen duskily down. Through the gloom he could see the deep, lustrous eyes. Her hair waved in a shadowed wealth above. Over him came an almost irresistible desire to touch it, but he quelled the impulse. Something must be wrong with his nerves, he thought.

Rita stretched both arms into the dusk. "I love the night!" she whispered. "It rests me. Oh! when I am so weary it rests me."

Glover was silent. He felt she had some secret sorrow.

"Yes, it rests me. Not the bright night, but the deep, dim, clinging night-time, damp with river mist! It refreshes as well as rests."

"You are nature's own child," Carl whispered, in turn, "a daughter of mother earth."

"And motherless."

He drew closer and saw there were tears in her eyes. A desire to comfort, to soothe, nearly overpowered him to make him clasp her close. Instead, he leaned one heavy hand on the door frame.

"Is that your sorrow?" he asked.

"No"—the tears fell.

"Tell me, tell me," he said.

"Go—please go!" the trembling voice interrupted.

"Oh, but tell me."

"Go"—the tremulous tones repeated.

In pity Carl turned away, and when he looked back the night had shut out her form.

CHAPTER XI.

JACOB GRAHAM hobbled off the train on his crutches. Carl and Freeman were there to meet him.

"Hello!" the uncle cheerily bawled. "How is the mine?"

"Right, sir," Freeman said. "The sheds are just finished. We can start Number Three Shaft any time now.

"How do you like your new master?"

"None better, barring yourself, sir."

"Well, that's good. Freeman told me you did fine work, Carl—worked hard, too. I think it's time you had a holiday."

"You're right, sir," the foreman said. "He has worked harder than any two bosses in camp. It's time he had a rest."

"Oh! see here," Carl objected, "I haven't been doing a tap for two or three weeks. If you need me, why, I can stay right on. You might dismiss me for not working enough. That would perhaps be just."

"We will work you hard enough later on," Graham said. "Better take your holidays now while you can. We will want you in a month or so."

"To tell the truth, I would like to run down to Toronto to see the boys. I want to see Clive, too, uncle, out by the old place, you know."

"Yes, yes, take as long as you like. You've been cooped up long enough."

As chance had it, only a few hours later he received a letter from Clive Halycon, begging him to spend a couple of months on the farm. Halycon had been his boyhood friend in the old, old days. He lived just a stone's throw from the former Graham place, and the friendship of the two had never died out as surface friendships do. Every year of his college course Carl spent some time on the Halycon farm by the Humber, and those were red-letter days for him. Now the invitation came at a welcome and opportune time, so he made ready to go.

"I had a letter from Clive," he told his uncle, who came in while he was packing up some things. "He wants me to go down."

"Ha!" his uncle exclaimed, "Clive is a good sort, a deuced good sort. There wasn't much difference between you two boys when you were little urchins in knee pants."

"That's why we always stuck together, I guess," Carl said.

"You always did anyhow. In mischief or anything else you were always together."

"I wish he could have had a chance at college."

"Bright as a dollar! He knows more than some college men know."

"Where's Freeman?"

"At the mine. Why?"

"I'll leave these mining books. There's no use taking them."

"No, you won't want them there."

"By George, it makes me feel good to think of getting on the old spot again. Drony old peaceful spot!"

"You just bet!" the old man said. "All field and orchard!"

"And wood."

"Yes, and the spring, do you remember it?"

"I do. Three elms and one ash stand beside it. Many an hour I've lain there, bare feet, blue overalls, one suspender, rim of a hat, freckles, and tan."

"You were the deuce to wander," his uncle declared, eagerly recalling these past episodes. "It was the dickens of a task to keep you from losing yourself. As for the clothes, well, nobody expects to keep more than a third of a boy covered. It's natural instinct in him to touch as much sun, air and earth with his bare self as he can."

"The old mill is gone."

"Yes. Geordie Ross was the last to run it. He is dead now and the place is gone to ruin."

"There," Carl said, "I'm ready to go any time. I've all packed that I want."

"Well, good luck to you, boy! Stay as long as they'll keep you, and bring me a branch from the big oak."

"I will," the nephew said. He had done that every time he visited the place.

Downstairs he called Wong Loo to carry his grip to the station, while he went to say good-bye to the Theodores.

"Goin' away?" Wong asked.

"Yes, for a short while."

"How longee? Me be lonelee."

"Poor duffer!" Carl said banteringly, "you can talk to Freeman."

"Damee Freeman! He makee me mad. He thrashee me for smokee longee pipe when him smokee himself."

"What?" Carl gasped.

"You not know he smokee?" the Chinaman asked, with cunning eyes a-blink.

"Freeman smoke opium?"

"Yes, him smokee. That how he know Wong smokee."

Carl was amazed. He had never dreamed that Freeman was a victim of the drug. He remembered now his frequent nightly absences.

Carl walked up to the servant and grasped him firmly by the shoulder.

"Look here!" he commanded. "Are you lying?"

"Me no lie. Me tellee truth."

"Where the deuce do they smoke?"

"Charlie Ling has backee room. Chairee, bed, pipe. Goodee time!"

"You rascal," Carl said. "When did you smoke last?"

"Not for fouree weeks. Me keepee my job."

"See that you stick to it," was Carl's advice.

Calling at the Theodore home, he found them absent, but he learned from Giles that they had gone down the line for a day or two, so there was no use waiting. He had all ready to leave, so he took the night train down, glad at the thought of meeting his old and dearest friends and of seeing the cherished spot by the Humber.

CHAPTER XII.

The harvest moon shone down where Carl stood with Clive Halycon at the old farm-lane gate. Just below, the dear, quiet Humber threaded through field and wooded bank, silent and silvery under the moonbeams' glow. Down all the valley length a wreath-like mist wound smokily in the willow tops, white, purple, mauve and gray, as each changing ray grew brighter or dimmed. Rolling far went heavy-laden fields, thickly studded with shocks of dark-brown grain standing higher than the rotten wood rails of the scrawny, black fences. The deep orchards cast dark shadows to their midst, and the deeper woods beyond hid plenteous crops of pumpkins, squashes, corn, and buckwheat in the shelter of the south side.

Carl had been there a week, and the former love for the calm spot had gripped him as strongly as ever.

They had fallen into silence where they watched alone beneath the stars and moon. At last Carl broke that silence.

"Clive," he said, "there is no place like it in all the world."

"No," Halycon said, "because it is home."

"Yes, for us both. Therefore it is beautiful."

"Carl! I've always held you far dearer in my soul because you haven't forgotten the old place. So many, so very many despise their birth spot for the reason it is some antiquated village or some belated wilderness section. When they taste city life and the wide reach of a continent or two, the place where they first saw God's light is naught but contempt for them."

"Ah!" Glover answered, "that is something I could never forgive. I have seen those, too—college asses who feel shame trickle down their spines should they have to walk up street with their fathers, simply because they don't wear a collar with the latest wing or their shoes aren't Broadway cut."

"It is the littleness of their souls. Great, generous hearts never feel those petty distractions."

"Now, there's Whitmore. You remember him? He used to be out here at his cousin's. He was ashamed to introduce his parents to a person, and two better souls never raised a more worthless son."

"You're right," said Clive, "and I don't think he ever visits them now. Do you know where he is? Ben Clarke said he was coming out here soon. I don't know from what place."

"I saw him in Cobalt," Carl answered, "picking up what he could from the green cloth. He has been following the gambling game all over the two continents, he said."

"Good-for-nothing rascal! And his cousins, the Clarkes, make a little god of him when he comes out."

"That is always the luck of his class. They strike the softest spots everywhere. Whether they are blackguards or not doesn't seem to make any difference to the majority of people."

"Blest if this isn't a queer old world, Carl. It is a mixture of all sorts. Why, in this small community we have representatives of nearly every type."

"Yes, but you aren't caged in alongside of them. You have room to pass by beyond calling distance. It is soul-satisfying to put a bit of pure earth and air between some people and yourself at times. Don't you find it so?"

"That's true," Clive admitted, "and for various reasons. There are certain periods when I couldn't for the world rub up against some who should be my friends. Oh! say, that reminds me, we're to go out to-morrow night over to the Kearns' home."

"What is it?"

"Mary, the younger sister, is having her girl friends. They need some older ones to balance the atmosphere, don't you see?"

"Ah!" Carl chuckled, "not to let juvenile hilarity get beyond bounds?"

"Exactly! They need some wise, seriously-minded people such as you and I, eh?" his friend inquired with a hearty laugh.

"I'm afraid, Clive, you could yet be as giddy as the youngsters?"

"And you?"

"I might. It seems like yesterday we set mill-wheels of tin in the rapids down there, and gloated over five-inch chub we caught in the Basswood Hole. Doesn't it?"

"Only a little while," Clive sighed. "Life runs so swiftly. To-morrow night we will wish we were boys again."

"Will we be bored?"

"As for me I can't say. As for you, not."

"How is that?"

"Jean will be there," Clive gurgled, in mischief.

"Pshaw!" Carl exclaimed; "look here, old man, I'll break your blessed neck if you don't cease your chaffing. You've been at it ever since I came. Ha, ha! if I could only get back at you!"

"But you can't. I don't commit myself. Whereas you—"

The sentence ended in a splutter, for Carl's felt hat flew straight into Clive's face, smothering words and puffing pipe together.

"Oh, say!" the latter ejaculated. "There, you've broken my best smoker!"

"Never mind," Carl mocked. "I'll buy you another on the condition that you dry up."

"I guess I'll have to purchase it for myself, then," Clive went on, "for I was going to say you do commit yourself. Why, anyone can see it. You have eyes for nobody else when she is around."

"Oh, nonsense! Sure we were schoolmates together, and have been friends ever since! We always will be, nothing more!"

"As yet."

"Clive, you're a thorough idiot."

"No, it is you. One always is when one is under the spell," was Halycon's jocund answer. Then his voice changed from the bantering tones to deep, earnest ones not to be mistaken.

"Prince, old boy," he said, "there is no one like her in the world. She's a treasure. That's what she is! Prince, Prince, my friend, you'll never find a truer, better, tenderer heart on the wide earth. She has an angel face, too, but that doesn't count. It's the heart that tells. I know Jean Thurston. You know her just as well. Why, she is all heart!"

Glover turned and laid both hands on his comrade's shoulders.

"Clive," he asked, quietly, "do you love her?"

"No!" Halycon returned, "I don't. I don't think I was ever built to love. I'm not the man that loves, Prince. I do not love Jean Thurston, but I place her before all God's women. If you care, old man, go in and win."

CHAPTER XIII.

In the Kearns homestead the children's revelry was at its height. Out on the spacious kitchen floor they indulged in all the old and new games. All was romping and merriment. They had free lease and full license, and, as might be inferred, were enjoying it to the very limit. Mary Kearns, the younger sister and a sparkling image of unsuppressed vivacity, was leader in all, while her elder sister, Lucy, managed affairs, so that the fun seemed endless. Several of her friends were assisting there, while many more sat in the quaint curtain-hung parlor, enjoying themselves, in a quieter way, quite as much as the noisy element beyond. At least, Carl Glover thought they were, for the reason that he was enjoying himself. He was sitting by chance next Jean Thurston. In some odd manner the occasion drew them together. The outbursts of childish laughter echoing into the room seemed to tell them they were aliens from the sports. Over on the other side of the parlor the rest had grouped for table games or conversation.

"It seems we are forced to amuse each other," he laughed, nodding towards the others.

"Of that we are quite capable," Jean said. "At least we could in the school-days. Have we changed?"

"At heart, I hope not," Carl replied. "In a way, you have."

He motioned to the tasty gown which fitted her trim form so neatly. "In those days it was gingham dresses and aprons of unbleached cotton with the lettering S-p-e-c-i-a-l still left on," he said.

"Oh, how mean to remember that! Let me see if I can recall something nasty about you. Yes, real nasty. Oh! why, of course, you were so cranky—a regular little tyrant! You sat in the front seat, pulled your hair down over your forehead and just frowned! Frowned half your time! There—" and her voice rippled off in delightful mirth.

"And now?" Carl questioned.

"Now you are changed."

"For better or for worse?"

"Medium," she said, looking at him with tantalizing eyes.

Carl's glance ran over her from the brown hair to the foot that tapped the hearth-iron. She was good to look at—so tender and pure, and perfectly fashioned! Involuntarily he fell to comparing her with Rita Theodore. Ah! there was no comparing them. The dark, proud goddess could not be thought of with the warm, sweet beauty of this sunny-haired girl. Foolish as it seemed, he also found himself asking: "Which? If you were choosing, which?" And in spite of his efforts his thoughts answered: "Jean, Jean—a thousand times."

An unusual outburst of uproarious mirth rolled in to them.

"Come, Jean!" Carl cried. "This must be something good. Let us see!"

She rose quickly, and they passed the length of the hall that led into the room where the romping was in progress. There they stood at the door and watched the jovial throng of children. Lucy Kearns emerged from the crowd and came to them.

"Won't you join?" she merrily called.

Carl shook his head. "We are just a little too ancient," he said, half in jest, half in earnest. Somehow he wanted to keep Jean at his side just then. With quick perception Lucy vanished, giving a protesting shake of her curls.

Carl looked at his companion. "You didn't want to go?" he interrogated.

"No, not now," she smiled. She leaned her shoulder on the woodwork and tilted her bright head against the door frame. The hanging lamp above sent a soft, shaded glow down over her features, revealing all their rich, pure beauty.

Carl saw and caught his breath sharply with a stinging pain. In that one instant the veil was torn from his eyes.

And now, as the new song went thrilling through his blood, Carl knew that he had always loved her. Always loved and never known! How strange it seemed! His brain whirled. The scene before him grew dim, and he could hear not a sound although the noise was booming right in his ears. Only one thing could Carl see, and

that was Jean! Jean!—the one woman under God's sky for him now. Oh! the face and the brown-gold hair, and eyes as blue as the deep sea! Then came the sharp pang of doubt like an arrow into his soul. What if this first, fierce, free, proud love of his were vain?

Slowly she turned her gaze from the play to Carl, and he looked with all the light of new-born worship into those eyes. Up through the veins of his face the hot blood surged, and he wheeled suddenly towards the games lest she should see.

"It is delicious just to watch," Jean murmured.

"It is heaven!" Carl said, and the fervent tone sent the color to her cheeks. He wondered if she understood. Could she see what was in his eyes, his voice and his manner? A few more blissful minutes they were left together. Then they were hurried out to help the younger ones with the figure dancing. Everyone was persuaded to join in this amusement. All the rest of the evening Carl was in a dream. He acted and talked mechanically. Afterwards he could not remember a word he said or a thing he did. All he remembered was the hair, the eyes, and the voice.

A chance night, a chance suggestion, a chance incident!—these, if you will, had forced him to the crucial point in his life. The night had either brought him Jean Thurston and eternal happiness, or placed her far beyond his reach on the starry heights, with the dark, unknown valleys that men call Sorrow lying between.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew pearl'd;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!"

—Browning.

THIS was what Clive Halycon heard lilting from the upper rooms of the house as he guided the busy reaper through heavy wheat crops just below the orchard. He smiled to himself. "The year may not be at the spring," he said, musingly, "but the rest is all right. All's right with the world! Ah! I wonder if you would tell me why, old boy. I don't think you would admit it, but it was plain, so very plain, last night." And Clive shook his whip toward the open windows from whence the sound came.

"But I'm glad," he continued half aloud, tickling the sleek backs of the big farm horses, who were nothing loath to stand idly in the shade of the orchard boughs. "Yes, I'm glad. It's what I've always wished for. They were meant for each other. Of all men, give me Carl, and of all women, Jean. I've been wishing for it

every time he came, but they never seemed to be thrown together much before, never since the school-days. Still, old boy, the path will not be all easy going. There are others who find their whole world in her eyes and will never quit till they risk their happiness in a declaration. You'll have uncomfortable times, for if she favors you—and upon my soul I believe she will—they'll all hate you. Somehow from her eyes last night I thought so. There was a new, new look there. Prince, dear old chap, if she gives you that heart of hers, all will be right with the world."

Clive sat idly on the reaper seat, and the standing horses reached over to munch the timothy between the fence rails. Across the billowy grain surface rippling heat waves rushed in snake-like undulations, growing clearer as the morning sun gained strength. The orchard was alive with bee, bird, and fruity coloring, while the mingling scents its clover gave filled his lungs with aromatic breath. It was good to be living in such an air, such a sun, such an earth.

Suddenly a curly brown body shot over the orchard fence, emitting a volley of joyous barks, which broke Clive's train of thought. Nero, his setter, capered in front of the placid horses and snapped playfully at their noses. "Ha, there, you rascal! stop that!" Clive called. "No play now! We must work. Get up there!"

The long lash threatened in the air, and the reaper's whirr grew sharply clear again. "Come on," he called

to disappointed Nero. "We will get you a cottontail to chase, you restless creature of dogdom. Hurrah!"

And true enough—as he cut a wide swath of yellow stalks, a rabbit, grey-furred, long-eared, and white-tufted on the tail, went scampering out to dodge through the rails. Nero looked at Clive, for he never chased fur without his master's command.

"Go!" Clive cried. Yelping excitedly, Nero bounded away on a long stern chase, which no one knew better than himself would be futile. He ran for the sake of giving vent to his exuberance of joy, while Clive laughed at his mad whirling through clover, goldenrod, brake, and grain.

> **"—hillside's dew pearl'd;**
> **The larks on the wing;**
> **The snail's on the thorn—"**

burst a glad voice coming down the orchard path. With a bound Carl leaped the fence, as Nero had done, and fell into place with the shocker, lightening his labor one-half.

"You're docked two hours," Clive called back from the reaper seat. "Have to do better or you can look for another job."

"That'll do," Carl shouted, "or I'll pull you off that seat and take the lazy job myself."

"Ha! ha! ha!" came his friend's merry laugh. "Yelp! yelp!" the setter's bark sounded from the valley that bordered the woods. "Sweetest yet! Sweetest yet! Oh! sweet, sweet, sweeter still, sweeter, sweeter,

sweeter"—the bobolink poured his melodious chant in their ears. The cadence rose higher and higher, buoyed by mingling notes of warbler, song-sparrow, oriole, and thrush.

"Oh! what a morning!" Carl cried; "all's right with the world!"

CHAPTER XV.

It was as Clive Halycon had prophesied. There were others who found their world in Jean Thurston's eyes, and Carl's path was not so smooth as he had dreamed. Being of such a refined and sensitive nature, she treated all alike. It was said that she never offended anyone. No matter how unworthy or distasteful to her, there was never anything in her manner to speak it. That was what bothered Carl. No matter in whose company she was, she seemed perfectly happy, and he began to fear vaguely that he had been wrong in thinking favor was shown to him.

All admirers were treated alike. Never was any preference shown. Only at times Carl thought her eyes rested on him with a look that was different. Those who sought her company were many in number, but who should the foremost be but Whitmore—Whitmore of all men! He had come to his cousins', the Clarkes, and was as much at home in this community as Carl Glover himself.

So as the days went on there were village gatherings, church occasions, picnics; there were cross-country jaunts, boating parties, barn-raisings, bees, and dances in which all the neighborhood was included. And upon

these occasions Carl found his greatest happiness at Jean Thurston's side. There was bitterness for him, too, since Whitmore, his rival, often deprived him of that pleasure. Between the two a gradual enmity had sprung up, chiefly on account of Whitmore's narrow nature. Carl was too noble-minded to make any difference with him, but Whitmore either could not or would not conceal his hatred of Carl. His jealous animosity grew greater and greater till he came to avoid his former classmate and spoke to him only when it was unavoidable. People about the place were not slow to see how matters stood, and Carl found himself placed in many an uncomfortable position by Whitmore's attitude.

As to Jean Thurston, no one could judge from her manner whether she favored the one or the other—or neither. Carl wondered that she was so affable to Whitmore, knowing him as he did. But the girl knew nothing derogatory to him. Carl could have told her. and he knew a few words of his would have placed Whitmore in oblivion. This, however, he would not do. "Win," he told himself, "and win with yourself, not by spoiling a rival." Of all things Carl loved a fair fight. He would fight a fair fight and let the best man win.

On this point Clive talked with his mother one night. He had come in after his day's work, and lay, with his newspaper, at full length on the verandah.

His mother sat in a rocker, knitting, her eyes stealing away from her work oftentimes and resting lovingly on the son's face.

"Where did Carl go?" she asked, with a smile that said she knew already.

"Up to Thurston's," he answered, smiling at her in turn.

"He goes often," she quietly observed. "Of course, it's Jean."

"Nothing else! Carl has it bad!"

"Yes," his mother said, earnestly, "I hope she returns it."

"So do I. That rascal Whitmore! I feel like breaking his bones. What right has he to look at a girl like Jean?" Clive demanded, vehemently. "She's worth a thousand like him. Some one should cut short the intimacy."

"It is really too bad," his mother said. "She is such a fine, fine girl."

"See here, mother mine," Clive declared, with sudden determination, "if Whitmore wins her, I'll take upon myself the duty of showing her what he really is. He won't marry her. No, by the saints, not while I am alive. Why, I'd throttle him, cripple him first. But I think her inner sense will teach her which is the true soul. Carl will win. Mother, do you hear? Something tells me he can't lose."

"I pray that he will. He is so like my boy," she said, affectionately smoothing his ruffled locks. "Clive, if

you had been wild and wayward, I would never have lived after your father's death. But oh, son, you've been so dear and true to me." Her voice trembled, and a hot tear splashed on Clive's upturned face.

Quickly he swung himself up to the arm of her chair and took her head to his breast.

"Mother, mother," he said, softly, "how could I have gone astray while you were with me?"

"Boys with the best mothers on earth do," she answered, with soft hands holding his cheeks.

"Yes," he admitted, "they sometimes do. Yet you have never needed to fear."

"No, my son, and I thank God and you. Sometimes I think of them, frail, gray-haired, and anguish-eyed, praying in their silent rooms for the boy who is somewhere, somewhere—but God knows where! I can see them, Clive, praying on into the small hours till they hear the step on the threshold. I don't know how they bear it. Boy, my boy, it would have killed me."

"Mother," Clive murmured, kissing her, "I know. And you have tasted of sorrow, too."

"Yes, sorrow, Clive, but holy sorrow. It is not the other. You have never made me taste that."

"Carl is the same. He would have been a real son to you, mother, perhaps better than I."

"He is a wonderful boy—or man! You are both men now, yet I always think of you as boys. He deserves more credit, too, since he was an orphan at an early age."

"Yes, there is no one like him. Oh! I hope Jean sees it. Why!" he exclaimed, "your hair is damp, mother; we must go in. I have forgotten and kept you out too long."

"True," she said. "It is getting quite damp. I had forgotten also. I was so happy with you and with the old memories. See! my dress is damp, too. The dew is heavy, but the moonlight, Clive, isn't it beautiful?"

"Beautiful," he said, "but we mustn't enjoy it longer. Leave it for Carl and Jean."

CHAPTER XVI.

Hourly the subtle love-god beset and chained Carl's heart with his magic rapture and power. His most passionate desire was to tell Jean, to plead his love, to end his suspense and doubt. The fated moment came suddenly and unexpectedly.

It was somewhere in the first weeks of August. At the hall of the village a real, old-fashioned, enjoyable country dance was held, one in which it was the custom to give not so much attention to the intricate and artistic tripping as to pure-hearted fun and sociability. All the young people of village, country-place, and farm were there. The true enjoyment of the occasion was increased a hundred fold for Carl, since he had basked in Jean's smiles nearly all evening. Whitmore was present, but by many passages of arms Carl had worsted his rival and kept Jean to himself. Whitmore's persistent attempts to gain her company had made Carl rather more reckless and open in his attentions than was his wont, and when the other repeated his attempts, Carl threw himself into the contest with such grim insistence beneath his mask of laughter and good-humor that Whitmore finally had to withdraw, thoroughly chagrined.

A nod, a smile, a look, were the signs interchanged among the company at the conspicuous monopolizing of Jean's favor by Carl. Not a few looks were anything but friendly, and jealousy could be read in the eyes of some of both sexes. But Carl did not care; he was past caring. He loved her, and he would keep her to himself. What right had others to criticize?

He could not number the dances he had with her, and didn't want to. To his great satisfaction Jean seemed to be glad in his presence. Sitting at tea, after lively exercise, she complained of being slightly chilly. Carl immediately brought her a wrap, some fancy white thing that women love to wear, and tossed it about her shoulders. Behind him he caught a low giggle and the almost inaudible feminine whisper, "How considerate The Prince is!"

"Yes," another voice whispered, "and how gracefully Jean submits! It must be an awful bore."

The quick blood flamed into Carl's face, partly in anger, partly in shame. Jean had not heard the comments, but she saw his flush.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing," Carl answered, but in his eyes came a hard gleam. A bore, was he? Ah! he would know if he had been and know before he left.

Dancing afterwards, Carl waited till in circling the room there was no one just near. Then he looked down at the hair and eyes.

"Jean," he whispered, "have I danced too much with you to-night?"

"No," she answered. "Why?"

"I overheard some remarks a few moments ago. Some one commented on how I had been boring you this evening. Jean, have I?"

"No, no!" she protested. "How could anyone be so mean as to say that?"

"I have danced with you a great deal," Carl said. "Perhaps for the formality of the thing it has been too much. In their minds I have been guilty of a breach of etiquette in doing so, and they may be right. But you will know why it is."

"I will know—when?"

"Soon."

"Tell me now."

"No, not now," he hurriedly said. "You don't know what you ask."

"Tell me now," the low voice pleaded.

"Not here, not here!" he cried. This was not what he had dreamed of so often. This was not the moment. How could he tell his love in the throng and in the dance? How could he plead? No, some other place, some other time!

"Carl, tell me why," she said again.

"Jean, don't ask me. You know! Oh, you know!"

"I don't," the girl murmured. "Tell me. Please!" There was just the slightest pressure of her fingers on his arm, but it sent the blood singing to Carl's ears.

He couldn't resist speaking now, and it was not in the way he had dreamed.

"Why?" she questioned, as they circled the room again.

"Surely you know!" he answered, trying to gain time.

"No, why?" Again the finger-tips prompted.

"Jean, Jean, you know," he said, softly but passionately. "You know. It is only three words. How can I say them here?"

"Tell me them," the girl said, with a glad, tremulous catch in her voice.

"You know. Just three—three little words that make for us heaven or black despair."

"What are they?" she insisted. The fragrance of her presence was in his soul. Shyly she bent her head back to look at Carl, and he was lost in the paradise of her eyes. He bent with lips almost at her ear as they danced.

"I love you!" were the tense words.

Then the room and the lights swam before him as they did that other evening till the grasp of her hands on his arms brought his senses back. The grip was strong and thrilling. The music seemed far, far away, and Carl swung through the dance mechanically.

"Jean," he whispered, "is there any hope for me?"

Her breath came in quick heaves. "Oh! I had never thought—"

"Tell me," he interrupted, fiercely, "for the love of God, tell me! Is there any hope?"

"Yes!" she breathed, and in that one whispered word heaven was born for Carl. Despair was naught but a dim cloud brushed aside by the mighty wings of his rapture.

CHAPTER XVII.

What followed during the remainder of that evening was unknown to Carl. He had to give Jean up to another partner soon, and it was not long before the dance broke up.

"Jean," he whispered, when he had recovered her for the last dance. "When can I see you? When can I talk to you alone?"

"I don't know," she said. "Oh, any time." Her tones were nervous.

Carl got but a word and a pressure of the hand at parting, for she had come in the Clarkes' load. They were near neighbors. Carl himself had walked with Clive. A new, jealous pang stung him when he saw Whitmore take the seat beside her. He quelled it at once, for that one word of hers dispelled oceans of doubt.

Impatiently Carl awaited the evening of the next day, and before the time could well be called evening, he was at the Thurston farm. The men were busy at the barns, and it was the mother, a buxom woman of forty, who answered his knock.

"Why," she cried, "it is you, Carl! Come in, come in. I am right in the midst of jam-making. You will have to talk to Jean or else sit in the hot kitchen. See

my face!" and she laughed merrily, fanning her rosy countenance with a big white apron. "She went out into the orchard some place. I shall call her."

"No, no," Carl said, eagerly, "I'll find her. Which way did she go?"

"Down the path. There!—my jam has boiled over!" She disappeared with a rush into the kitchen, whence came a hissing sound.

Carl turned down the path, under the bending boughs of snows, astrachans, duchesses and pippins, as they leaned earthward under their plenteous harvest fruit.

He knew where he would find her—in the hammock-nook, down where the balsams bordered the orchard, and where with them the mulberry trees made a quiet corner screened from all about. With silent steps Carl stole along the clover-fringed pathway. She was there, not in the hammock, but upon a long, rustic, willow-woven seat at its side. An open book lay on the cushions, but her gaze was far off where the setting sun turned all the western clouds to pools of flame. A sudden shyness which he had never known before seized upon him. The former hearty comradeship was gone. In its place arose something like divine reverence. This was not Jean Thurston, the schoolmate of his schooldays, the companion of his youth. It was the woman he loved.

She did not hear him coming, but sat unconscious of the tenderness and beauty of her attitude. Carl took a step towards her and then stopped, for the great current of his love took the sight from his eyes, making

him almost reel. He put one hand against a branch. its dead wood snapped. Jean turned with a quick cry.

The next moment Carl had her close to his heart, and their lips met in a clinging bliss that seemed as if it would never end. Then she hid her burning face on his shoulder.

"Girl, girl," he murmured, smoothing each wave of sunny hair. "Is it true? Tell me I am not dreaming."

"Yes," she whispered, brokenly, "it is true, Carl."

"You love me?"

"Carl, I—love you," she faltered. "I have said it for the first time in my life. I can say it often now."

Her eyes searched his in deep earnestness.

"Am I the first?" she asked, softly. Carl kissed her finger-tips reverently.

"Jean," he said. "You are the first and only one in the world."

"I am glad," Jean cried. "Yet I am afraid I shall bring you unhappiness all through life."

"How?"

"We shall never suit each other. You are so clever and so far above me."

Carl smiled confidently. "On the contrary, you are a thousand times better than I am," was his answer. "Your heart is worthy of a king's love."

"And it has only a Prince's," she laughed.

"It has all my soul can give," he said, earnestly.

Over in the west each ruby pool of sunset had darkened to a purple lake of night. The twilight's human

touch was upon their faces and hearts. All the night singers of earth had gathered in a choir sending out its crescendo sound to the dew and stars.

"How did you ever come to love me?" Jean asked, suddenly. "I am only a country girl. I don't believe that I can ever suit you."

"Never think that for a moment!" said Carl, with decision.

"But you are from 'Varsity. You are an artist, with a genius for art. I cannot spoil your life. Carl, you must leave me!"

Her vehemence told that she had just come to that painful realization.

"Little one, do you know what you are saying?" cried Carl, with equal vehemence.

His voice held a note of pain like the cry of some wounded wildwood thing.

"Forgive me, Carl!" she said, with contrition. "I didn't mean to hurt. Yet I feel so unworthy."

Up above the harvest hills the moon showed a pearly arc. The trembling rays of light crept through the interlacing boughs chequering the grass into little squares of moon and shadow. Like swift wraiths the nighthawks flapped to and fro.

"When did you first find out that you—cared?" Jean asked, hesitatingly.

"That night we were thrown together at the Kearns home," Carl replied. It came to me like a flash as we

stood by the door watching the children romp. Do you remember?"

"Yes," she whispered.

On her face there was an unfathomable smile. Carl could see it even in the shadows.

"Why are you smiling?" he asked.

"I knew it then, too."

"You did?"

"Yes. I read your face and eyes."

"Did you care yourself?"

"Yes, Carl, I cared."

"If you knew, why did you make me tell you last night in all that throng? I did not want to. Why did you beg me to speak?"

"I thought it best."

"Why?"

Jean put her hand gently upon his.

"Carl," she said, "do not think I am trying to pain you. I had made up my mind to refuse you."

"Do you mean—"

"I was thinking of your life," she interrupted.

"You wished me to declare myself under handicapping circumstances so that it would be easier for you to refuse me?"

"Yes."

"I asked you if there was any hope. What then?"

"I couldn't pain you when I saw how much you cared. It meant everything to you. Your voice told

it, and those words, 'for the love of God.' I couldn't wound you, Carl."

"What were you thinking when I came to-night?"

"I was planning what I would say and how I could convince you it was better. But you did not speak. You just—took me—"

"Girl," he said, "you are very, very beautiful."

She turned her head away, saying, "Don't tell me that, Carl. Tell me you love me. Tell me how much."

"That can never be told," Carl declared.

Jean arose in sudden remembrance that it was getting late. Carl gathered up her cushions with the book and carried them in.

"When shall I speak to your father and mother? To-morrow?" he asked, at parting.

There was a tremulous note in her voice which bespoke the depth of this great new joy of hers when Jean answered, "As you wish." Then she fled into the house like a frightened bird.

Carl walked down the still, grey road beneath the flooding glory of the moon. To him the planet was a mirror, and the white light in it was the crystal gleam of Jean Thurston's soul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SPACE of the most heavenly joy Carl Glover had ever known was rudely cut short by a message from his uncle. Jacob Graham was down with bronchitis in Cobalt. He would have to come.

Graham had been at last persuaded by his colleagues not to make the nephew a director or officer in the new company. They felt it was far too risky. The uncle fought for his cherished plan, but their arguments finally overwhelmed him, and he consented to leave him out. Then came his sickness and the fear that the shrewd rogues would, in case he did not recover, steal the claim from Carl. So he had sent for him again. Carl would have to take his place.

At that time, when he would have given the world to stay in the sweet Humber country, Carl felt the twinge which duty's hand sometimes gives with its call.

"Sweetheart," he said, when he had come to bid her good-bye in the nook by the balsams and mulberries, "it is hard to go, but he needs me."

"Yes, it is your duty, Carl. Still, I hope it will not be for long. You have grown to be so much to me."

"Little one, you are all earth and life to me."

"You love me too well," Jean murmured. "I dread seeing you go. I have such forebodings at times that something will come between us."

Carl laughed her fears to flight.

"You know what it costs me to go," he said. "Yet my uncle needs me, and I must hasten. He will soon recover from this temporary illness. Then I shall come for you. Will you be ready?"

"Yes," she whispered, the shy blushes crimsoning her face.

"What a strange thing love is!" said Jean, presently. "It is human yet heavenly, painful yet pleasing, hopeful yet fearful!"

"Yes," Carl agreed; "it is the gift of God's providence, the far-off breath of His grace."

They parted that night with vows re-pledged. Carl left in the morning for the city and Cobalt.

The first time Carl had travelled the line the disastrous wreck was the thought which committed all others to silence, but now he had an opportunity of seeing the demeanor of those bound for the silver centre where all their minds were concentrated. Everybody had the Cobalt fever. Before they reached North Bay it had developed into an acute attack, and upon arriving at Cobalt station Carl was amazed at the train-load of people which poured out. Crowds of enthusiasts blackened the place. It was almost like a holiday night at the Union Station in Toronto. The hotel was the same. It was jammed and surrounded by a chattering,

mingling, motley mass. There were millionaire mine-owners from the biggest cities of the continent, penniless miners from the Rand, sturdy brothers of the Klondike, brokers, operators, speculators, farmers, visitors, business men, sharps and grafters. All were mixed together, all with the fever, all incurable.

Carl felt the rush and thrill with them, but his family obligations checked his involuntary excitement. His uncle, though very sick, was not in serious danger, the doctor said.

The illness had displaced the wildcatters' plans again, and they waited a little, hoping it would be only a matter of a week or so. The doctor's opinion was that it would be a matter of months. Perhaps it might be spring or summer before Graham could take any hand in mining enterprises. On hearing this report, they had decided that they must go on with their project at once. Spring was their harvest-time, the outing for their wildcat. The stock must be floated immediately.

Their views were communicated to Graham. They urged him to trust them to form and also begged him not to bring in the nephew. This the uncle was at first inclined to do, for he had come to be of their opinion that it was extremely doubtful if Carl would have anything to do with the mine when he knew their plans. Still the fear haunted him that his sickness might prove fatal. He was long past middle age, and there was no telling what unforeseen event the next few months might bring. The others had money in the

enterprise. The only way out was to float the claim and hope for the best. In case of his death, the others would "squeeze" Carl, since he would not have the necessary cash to buy out the others. This was out of the question, for all Graham possessed was now at stake in those few acres.

He knew, also, that the other men could not be bought off cheaply. There was a fortune for them in this wildcat scheme if they only worked it without a flaw. Again and again the old man cursed himself for having been drawn into a position from which he could not extricate himself. There was only one way out, but would Carl take it?

The Cobalt fever has many phases. It varies with the afflicted. One has but to analyze the different human characters to diagnose the disease. Among all the types, from the mild surface fever to the life-deep one, no type is so dangerous and virulent as that which tempts a man to make his pile at any cost, regardless of honor or principle.

CHAPTER XIX.

While the main actors in this secret drama of the north were rehearsing and perfecting all the points of their scheme for organization as a rich silver company of Cobalt, Carl was left with little to do. He chafed under the situation. His uncle had summoned him because he needed him. Now no one appeared to need him. They wished his presence at the organization. Carl was willing to be there, but he did not like this waiting game. The time hung heavily upon his hands, for operations at the mines had been practically completed as far as the promoters intended to go without more capital.

Part of each day Carl spent with his uncle. Visits to many of the new mines occupied stray hours. Yet there remained much time still unaccounted for, and idling about the trail streets of Cobalt was not the most diverting amusement in the world. His heart went back in fancy to the distant Humber country, and the memories which flashed to mind served but to make the days seem longer.

Often in the evenings he would join the crowd of miners round the Clan. With silver on every tongue, the hours there were whiled away in animated conver-

sation. From the views of experienced men Carl gleaned much valuable information on prospecting and mining which afterwards stood him in good stead.

One evening, as he sat on the steps of the Clan, Giles came out and said a lady wished to see him.

"Who is she?" Carl asked, stepping inside.

"Miss Theodore. She is playing in there. She asked me to find you."

Reluctantly Carl traversed the billiard-room and entered the gilded room of chance. He recalled their conversation on the lake. If she were playing again, his words had been none too harsh.

His glance swept the room. Rita Theodore's tall figure stood by the gaming-table as he approached. Her white hand was extended, and she smiled the wondrous smile which turned so many men's heads.

"By accident I learned to-night that you had returned," she said. "I commissioned Mr. Giles to find you."

"I have been back two weeks," Carl observed.

"Two weeks!" The dark eyes reproached him. "And you never came to see us?"

"My uncle is unwell. I have been with him a great deal," Carl lamely answered.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a note of scorn. "You had no desire to renew acquaintances."

"Not that!" he protested. "I am never so ungrateful as to forget a friend. But I see you are playing still."

"Yes," Rita quietly admitted. There was none of the shrinking manner which he had observed that day upon the water.

"My words carried no weight?" he asked.

"Everybody bets in some form," she carelessly replied. "Is it different from betting on a race? Ha, ha! Did you never bet on one of your college stars, a cross-country runner, hurdler, or the like? Did you never bet on a boat race? Tell me!" she commanded.

"I have," Carl admitted, taken rather aback. "But that is different."

"How?" Rita challenged, sharply.

"It is muscle and skill. This is chance."

"There is just as much of the chance element in a game or race. I have seen it. The best team doesn't always win. The finest athlete doesn't always take the colors. It's the very, very same."

She turned to the cloth again. "I've been winning," she observed. "Now your arguments may have changed the luck. No, they haven't. See! I win. You try." Rita held a coin before his eyes, smiling in mirthful beauty.

Carl felt again the subtle power that had drawn him to her as at first. It had a weird, thrilling clutch on his senses.

"No," he stammered, confused by her wonderful fairness, and the tapering fingers in front of his eyes. He felt like taking the coin for the sake of touching her white finger-tips.

"Take it," she pleaded. The impelling power of her glance was something against which Carl had to fight like a demon. It half persuaded him.

"No, no," he said, breathing quickly. "I cannot, I—"

"To please me. Just try this once with my coin. See! I'll wish it luck."

With a merry gesture she pressed it upon her ruby lips.

Carl gave a harsh cry and made a movement as if to prevent her.

"There!" she cried, her features all aglow. "Will you take the lucky coin?" It was held to his face.

Ye gods! how beautiful she was! How passionate! And she had kissed the coin. He could almost catch its fragrance, it was stretched so near him.

"Don't, my God, don't!" came between his tight lips. They were at the end of the room. A palm screen shut them off from the rest, for they had drawn a step or two from the table's edge. The nearest man at the table was too busy to notice, or else this tableau had been the curiosity of those present. Carl, conscious of all her power, put out a hand to make her take the fascinating thing back, the forbidden thing that was half coin and half kiss. His fingers struck it, and the piece dropped to the floor. Carl seized it quickly, and held it tight in his palms. The thing seemed to burn. The hot touch of her lips seemed on it still.

"Let me keep it!" he said, in a hoarse, tense voice. Then like a flash Jean Thurston's face came to him, blue-eyed and pure.

"No, no, take it!" Carl groaned. "Take it, for God's sake!" The coin was held to her.

Instead, something happened that paralyzed him. Her warm fingers closed round his wrist with a rapturous sensation which conquered every fibre, mental and physical. The flaming light of victory was in Rita's eyes.

"Try the lucky coin for me!" her voice sighed. Her white fingers pressed upwards the wrist that was steel a moment ago. Like a nerveless man he stepped with her to the table, and the next instant he had staked the coin she had kissed.

"Red?" the man asked.

Carl nodded as if in some nightmare. The red turned and he won. Again he staked and won. A third time! The quick passion that had sent his father to a dishonored grave was alight. The hereditary gambling instinct ran like wine through his veins. The touch of white fingers had undone the self-denial of a lifetime. He won! He won! He won! With unsated desire he threw the gold over again and again. Such a run of luck had never been known in the Clan. The whole assembly ceased their own play and gathered round. He won and won! He was staking blindly and unthinkingly. Yet it made no difference. He won! With steady, fiery eyes he played and played. His lips were baked and his cheeks feverish. The

chance god was in him. By his side the woman trembled for what she had done.

A burst of applause told the end. He had broken the bank.

"Sir, I congratulate you!" the head manager, smiling savagely, said to him. Carl stared at the man as if demented. Then he turned from the table.

"Your winnings!" the manager said, touching his shoulder and pointing to the pile of bank-notes. "They will be easier carried than gold."

Mechanically Carl took them. Oh for a fireplace to sink them forever from sight! Rita's chatelaine hung from her arm, and he seized it. To get them out of sight, to hide these awful, accusing notes was his thought. They bulged the bag to its full capacity, and he snapped it viciously shut.

Then he wondered why another burst of applause went round.

The look in Rita's eyes was unfathomable.

"You have done it," she murmured, meaning the breaking of the bank.

"Yes, I have," Carl said, in tones which were like those of a swimmer suddenly choked by the rushing surf. "But, my God! what have you done?"

CHAPTER XX.

All the hours of that next day Carl Glover fought in the silence of his room with the demon which was loose within him. Shame, humiliation, and remorse mingled together to make him writhe at what he had done. His soul revolted at the sudden passion, yet he knew it would conquer him in the least temptation. As evening drew near, he felt the blood-call stronger and stronger. The green of the cloth and the yellow of the gold were in his eyes. The glare and the throng seemed round him, and the lust of winning was saliently predominant.

With hands clenched behind his back, Carl paced up and down the room as he had done all the sleepless night before, fighting the demon's influence at his heart. To-night the Clan was waiting in its luxury of appointment for him. His companions expected the reappearance of the luckiest man in Cobalt. These were men and women who played through the same force of habit that caused them to indulge in whist over home tables in their native cities. The Clan was waiting with passive power for this great majority and with growing allurement for some who had yet to travel the longest road of life.

For Carl it waited with all hell's compelling force, a force which was not of earth, since it reached beyond the precincts of the grave. The hereditary fire that had consumed his father's hopes and self burned in Carl's veins.

When the first night shadows darkened the panes and the lights of the Clan shone out like evil lamps to point his way, Carl's burning desire almost overpowered him. His cheeks were white and drawn with resistance. In his eyes was a haunted look of horror. Great drops of the essence which we know as bitter agony hung upon his forehead. For hours he wrestled with unseen impish hands that seemed to be dragging his feet towards the threshold. He pulled the blinds tightly so as to shut out the world. He tried to read. He tried to work. He tried everything but thinking of the accursed wheel, yet to no end! A grip which was more than his human strength held him in thrall. Unsteadily he arose and found his hat. Then he half opened the door. There he turned back, opened it again, and once more turned back.

Oh, heaven! for something to hold! Something that would keep him there! He strove to pray, but the words seemed only a hollow mockery. What right had he to pray when there was no penitence in his heart, nothing but evil flame?

Then there rose to him Jean Thurston's face, pure, fair, serene, and holy. At the picture he cried aloud in agony.

He had severed her heart from him by an act of folly. "Far above her!" she had said. She did not know how far below; and the demon was still pulling him lower.

"Something of hers!" he thought. With quick search he took out the things from his trunk and seized a glove of Jean's, a tender, scented keepsake. He held it up reverently while his eyes grew moist, but at his heart the thwarted summons was still drumming. He felt as if he must go. Carl turned away with a groan of defeat, laying the glove back with one last look. But in the one last look he saw something else that brought a cry from him, a cry which was like triumph. Carl stooped and took from the confusion of things an object that he covered with kisses, tears falling as he did so. His heart full of a great mastering thankfulness, the tempted man turned his face to the mirror. The demon light was gone! The features were pale and marked with suffering, but each lineament held a new radiance of quiet joy.

"Mother! Oh, mother!" Carl whispered, kissing again the object which he held. It was his dead mother's prayer-book, the cover of white vellum soiled and worn, and its corners tinted with knots of faded violets. The spirit of the living had proved powerless. The mother love was stronger to save than the betrothal love.

CHAPTER XXI.

The meeting of those interested in Graham's property took place some days later. Carl's uncle had taken a decided turn for the better, although the physician said it would be months before he could take any part in business enterprises. He had been moved during the day hours into the room which Carl used as a study, and where all his books were kept. It was a cosy spot, with a big couch by the afternoon window. In this room the meeting was called. Jacob Graham lay on the couch. The others were ranged in front round a small table when Carl came in.

His uncle had never named the men who were financing the development of the mine, and Carl had never inquired. Imagine his surprise when he saw at the table Colonel Theodore, Freeman, Giles, and Jasper, a lawyer from Toronto, who, Carl remembered, had defended Whitmore in his college scrape.

"Here you are!" Theodore exclaimed, as Carl entered. "We have been waiting on you."

"Carl, these are the men financially interested in our mine and without whose assistance I could not carry on the work," said his uncle. "I am much indebted to them."

"I am pleased to find you here, gentlemen. I have known you in a friendly way, and I hope our business connections will be as pleasant as our friendship," Carl said, cordially enough. At once they commenced the discussion of their plans.

"Have you drafted any forms or suggestions?" Graham asked.

"Yes," Theodore replied. "Jasper has a crude outline of the whole thing. Of course it can be modified at the suggestion of anyone if the opinion is approved by the rest. Jasper, just explain what will have to be done."

Caleb Jasper, to Carl's eye, was a man who had seen hardship. His figure was lean and spare. The hair fell over his furrowed brow in thin, sandy threads. The face was clean-shaven, shrewd and hard, with eyes that shifted. He arose, papers in hand, to give them the needful information.

"In the first place," he began, "the company which we are about to form must be characterized by a striking and substantial name. There is much in a name. Those of you who have had anything to do with public sentiment will be fully aware of that fact. Before giving my suggestions, perhaps some of you have one of your own?"

The rest declared they had no name ready to offer.

"Then," Jasper continued, "I would suggest 'Consolidated Diamond Cobalt' as a suitable name for the property and company."

"Excellent!" Theodore exclaimed. "I don't think we need search farther. Do we, gentlemen?"

A murmur of approval assured him that the name was agreeable to all. Carl had to admit it was a striking one and suggestive of a strong company behind it.

"Next," the lawyer went on, "our capital should be at least $2,500,000. I would call it fully paid and non-assessable. The first allotment of shares should be about 200,000, which I would offer at 25 cents a share for one month or so. Then the price might be advanced to 50 cents. We can put on a second allotment and so on, gradually increasing the price. Freeman has a detailed account of the property and the development which can be used in advertising. Then we have the engineer's report, which will also be used."

"What engineer?" Carl asked.

"C. O. Bretham," Jasper answered. "He is an expert."

Now Carl did not know Bretham and therefore did not know he was one of the self-styled "experts" who were overrunning Cobalt.

"I never heard of him," he said. "Why didn't you get a man like Kingswell? It would have paid. Everybody knows him, and the public would have faith in his report."

"He was engaged some miles north," Jasper said. "Bretham is an expert, too. Then there is the matter of the officers and directors, gentlemen. I shall give

my suggestions, but please remember all this is but one opinion. I do not wish to dictate in any way."

"Everything has been quite satisfactory so far," Colonel Theodore assured him. "I cannot see where it could be improved."

"Nor we!" said Graham and Giles. "For president, of course, we shall have Mr. Graham," the lawyer resumed. Colonel Theodore, Giles, and Freeman clapped their hands in approval. The uncle made some weak protests which were drowned.

Carl sat silent. A strange distrust was coming over him. On what were they building all this scheme? On a wildcat?

He was about to speak when Caleb Jasper's cold, hard voice continued: "For directors I think we should choose Colonel Theodore, James Giles, and Henry Freeman."

"Freeman is boss," Carl interposed, sharply.

Jasper shifted his eyes. "True," he returned, "but as he is financially involved, he has the right to have a voice in what is done, and the fact that he is foreman makes him all the more valuable. As director he will know what he is directing. As for secretary, who could be more efficient than Mr. Glover?"

"Hold on!" Carl commanded, jumping up. "I want to ask you gentlemen one simple question before I have anything to do with this company."

"Carl, Carl!" his uncle cried. "Don't talk like that. You will not have anything to do with it? Why,

it is yours and mine. It is all the same. All I have is yours."

"No," Carl said, sternly. "This hole in the ground is not mine. These men are imposing on you. Will somebody kindly answer my question?"

"What is it?" inquired Jasper.

"Is this a wildcat proposition, or is it not?"

A silence fell upon the men. Then Theodore, stirring uneasily, said: "Well, you see, Mr. Glover, we are not exactly sure of its value. There is always a risk, you know. But you use very harsh terms."

"Not at all," Carl said. "There is no need to dress up a lie for me. Just tell me the plain truth. Is this a wildcat or not?"

"Well, yes, if you designate it by such a harsh term, but—"

"That will do," Carl interrupted. "I wish you good-day." He reached for his hat.

His uncle gave a cry of consternation and burst out with the rest in exhortations and pleadings. Carl listened to them, standing. Jasper was also erect where he had stood while offering his plans.

"Why," the Colonel was hurriedly explaining, "three-fourths of the mines in Cobalt are the same."

"See here!" Carl said, emphatically. "Understand me. You four men can put as much money as you wish into this mine. Bear the expense yourselves, and take the risk yourselves. I have nothing to say about that. But this floating a company without basis, watering a

worthless stock, and taking people's hard-earned money in exchange for five cents' worth of certificate, plunging that money into a mine here and risking it without hope of return, is what I do not countenance. There is another side to the question, too. In nine-tenths of the cases does the money actually received for thousands and thousands of shares go into development, or does it go into the pockets of the men behind the mine?"

The faces of Giles and Theodore flushed. Jasper's eyes grew harder. "You insult us!" he cried.

"I do not," Carl said, harshly. "I insult no one. But if you are working a game like that on the public you are a set of cursed swindlers."

"What?" Theodore gasped.

"Cursed swindlers, I said!" Carl repeated. "And of the lowest class! Bars would be too good for you."

Jasper was very white. He seemed about to fly at Carl's throat, but he controlled himself, for he thought to strike deeper with his tongue.

"Really," he said, his words coming with difficulty. "Then we should be very close relations of the professional gambler."

Carl started as if touched with a hot iron. "Jasper," he warned, "be careful. I might not control myself. You know as well as I do how that thing happened. I am to blame, but I am not a professional gambler."

"I judged from the ease with which you won and from your companion being a player also—" Here he paused and glanced furtively at Theodore, but the

latter gave no sign, evidently being unaware of the identity of Carl's companion at the time.

"What else could be inferred?" Jasper continued. "I have more cause to call you a gambler than you have to brand me as a swindler. Perhaps you will reconsider your words?"

"I will reconsider nothing," Carl said. "I have seen your name coupled with your brother's too often. The firm Jasper & Jasper is known to me. They are always solicitors for some shady scheme. Do you remember defending Whitmore in his 'Varsity scrape? You managed to get him off, and you gave him a brand-new, made-in-a-lawyer's-office reputation, when he hadn't any of his own left."

"You're a liar!" Jasper screamed.

"Ah! you'll retract that!" cried Carl, jumping for him.

The enraged lawyer seized a heavy paperweight and hurled it with all his strength.

Carl caught it on his left arm, and, swinging in a right-hander, knocked Jasper prone to the floor, whence he was lifted and restored to consciousness by the other three men. Carl looked at his uncle, who was almost in a nervous collapse at the turn affairs had taken. "Carl, Carl" was all Graham could articulate.

"I am sorry this happened," Carl remarked to Colonel Theodore.

"It is very irritating," the Colonel said. "You were both wrong, but don't let it go farther."

"I'll pay him out," mumbled the bruised Jasper. "I'll grind you for this, you—you——upstart!"

"No names, no names!" Carl cautioned, coming nearer. "Any time you wish to pay me out just invest in a stock of paperweights. I shall use the weapons Nature gave me."

"Never fear!" Jasper growled. "I'll have my revenge if it takes me till doomsday to think it out."

"You can't think," laughed Carl. "You have no brains!" And he went away.

CHAPTER XXII.

CARL'S intention was to get away from Cobalt as soon as possible. His uncle seemed to be recovering satisfactorily. Carl's presence was not needed at the mine. He laughed when he thought of the earnest endeavor with which he had worked there at an earlier date. It took him but a short time to pack his few belongings. But before he went, he thought he should see Rita Theodore and tell her that he had forgiven her.

Accordingly, as soon as it was evening he called at her house. Rita was at home, the maid said, but the Colonel had gone down town. Of this fact Carl was glad. It would be only embarrassment for the Colonel and himself to come in contact after what he knew about Theodore's "investments."

It happened that Rita was dressing when Carl came, so he was invited to enter the reading-room. He lay among the soft cushions in that dreamy, soul-possessing den of hers and waited. He did not read. It was satisfying just to gaze at the room and wait. When the maid lighted the lamp, its tinted radiance but enhanced the loveliness of all it glowed upon. Then Carl heard Rita's footsteps on the stair. She parted the door

draperies and stood for an instant, bowing to Carl, with her beauty showing in all its perfection against the dark background of curtain.

"I have kept you waiting," she said, faintly.

"A little," Carl returned, "but it is beautiful to wait here." Her radiance dismayed him. She was dressed in a creamy, clinging gown that he had never seen. She was dressed as he had never dreamed. She looked like a dark stage-queen of tragedy, a woman who battles with the minds and souls of kings. Coming from the draperies, Rita sank upon the cushions opposite Carl.

"And why?" she asked, with a smile.

"The room!" he answered. "It is perfect. You have such taste and such harmony."

"It is because you have harmony and art in your nature that you appreciate it. One who is not inclined to art would not admire it. It is like painting."

"Have you done any lately?"

"Not since that day we were painting last!"

"Ah!" Carl exclaimed in surprise. "That is a long time ago. Why didn't you paint since?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said, quickly, while her gaze went past him. "I haven't time, I suppose."

"You shouldn't neglect it."

"But you? What have you done?"

"Nothing," he replied.

"There!" Rita cried, with a laugh. "Then you are just as careless. We are both culprits."

"Yes, we are both culprits," he said, and the deep meaning of his words reached her. Neither of them had spoken of the incident to which he now referred.

The girl remained silent. Carl waited for some expression of sorrow or regret. None was forthcoming. Sudden pride rose in Carl's heart. He resolved that he, too, would be silent. He would offer no words of forgiveness till Rita voiced her regret at having been the means of making him gamble.

"When shall we paint again?" she questioned.

"I am leaving to-morrow," answered Carl.

Her cheeks blanched slightly. "For how long?" she asked.

"For ever."

"Don't say for ever!" she cried, vehemently. "I thought you were interested in your uncle's mining enterprise."

"I am no longer interested in that."

"Where do you expect to go?"

"I have not yet made my plans."

"But when did you take this sudden decision?" Rita inquired. "Do not think I am inquisitive, but something must have influenced you."

"Something of which I cannot speak!" he returned.

"Is it private?"

"Yes."

Rita placed a cushion under her head and remained in thought. How beautiful! How perfectly beautiful! was Carl's unspoken comment as she reposed against

the tinted silk of cushion and hanging. Again he felt the power of her eyes and of herself. He could feel the magnetic attraction that always drew him when near this girl.

"You are going," she murmured, bending a deep gaze upon him, "and we have been such friends."

"Such friends!" he echoed. "But we will still have the remembrance of that friendship."

She sat upright with a quick grace that startled Carl. One white arm with the slit sleeve falling away she stretched out in a sweet gesture.

"Will you always have that remembrance?" was her question. The dark eyes gleamed like stars.

"Always," Carl answered. He wished she would not gesture like that or be so perfect in pose.

"Will nothing blot it out? Will nothing be dearer?" The words came with liquid sweetness. Her head was thrown back with that downward look which in a beautiful face is all-powerful.

Carl gazed in fascination.

"Will it?" she prompted. The white hand that undid him once before was near to his face.

Carl felt the power of her charm. In another instant he would tell her there was nothing dearer, however empty the words might afterwards be.

Acting on the impulse of restraint, Carl rose swiftly from his seat, intending to depart, but the arm which had been bruised struck the corner of the settee. The twinge of pain through it made him involuntarily ease

it with his right hand, while his lips closed tightly. Rita was on her feet in an instant and at his side.

"What is it?" she cried, in alarm.

"Nothing," Carl said; "nothing!" He motioned her away.

"Oh, you are hurt! Let me see!"

"No, it is nothing," he repeated. "Please move away!"

Carl was shielding the arm from her view, for it was swollen, and he could not step past her since she blocked the way.

"Carl, are you hurt? Tell me the truth!"

"It is only a bruise," he answered. "I bruised it to-day. Of course, it is tender, and I struck it on the wood when I rose. It is nothing at all."

"But the pain, dear; I saw the pain in your face." Her tone was one infinitely sweet caress.

Carl flushed at the word. "Don't!" he cried. "Oh, Rita, don't! I am going."

"And for ever?"

"Yes."

Rita threw her hands up in abandon, with a flood of beseeching, appealing emotion in her eyes. "Carl," she said, and her voice thrilled him like low harp sounds. "My love! Why should it not be? Why should we part? Why can we not be together for ever? Oh! do you not see? Take me, Carl, take me!" All the passion which had shaken her soul many times before rushed out in a magnetic torrent.

"Carl, take me!" she trilled.

"No, no, it can never be!" he cried, shutting out the vision of her with a hand over his eyes.

"Why, Carl? Why will you leave me?"

"There is another," he groaned. "Down in the God-breathing country there is another, all sunny hair and soulfulness. I love her."

Rita gave a little scream, and her eyes were large with anguish.

"But I am going," he declared. "Enough of this! Let us say farewell."

"No, no!" the girl burst out, passionately. "I cannot let you go. I cannot give you up to her. Carl, don't you care? Have I not touched your heart a little?"

"No. I am going."

Rita's voice went low and tender. "I love you," she sighed. "You cannot go."

"I cannot?"

"No," she said, moving swiftly away from him, almost to the other side of the room. You would not accept my love when I was forced to declare it. Now you shall come to me. I can make you love me. Men for whom I did not care a farthing have gone insane over me. The one who is all the world to me shall be no different. Come, Carl, I am calling you."

She stood in lissome grace at the farther side. All queenly poise had vanished. Her form drooped like a swaying willow wand in a storm, calling a thousand

times stronger for pity and sympathy. Her matchless white arms were held to him, appealing and inviting. The wealth of night-tinted hair fell in billows over her neck and heaving bosom. Her eyes were looking at him with a great lustrous gleam, alluring in all its intensity. The head was thrown backward, giving her features that downward look which was so strong.

Carl felt himself drawn with compelling force. He tried to turn away, not to look, but his gaze involuntarily sought her again.

"Carl, will you come?" she whispered, throwing her arms wide.

Her words came breathing pathetically. She let her head fall to one side with hands clasped above.

"Dear," she scarcely murmured, "you are coming."

Against his will he walked slowly across the room towards her. When she opened her arms again they were stretched to him.

"Take me, Carl, take me!" Her arms almost caressed him. He never moved. Rita took a step nearer. Her arms were past his cheeks and nearly touching them. Her face was close, with the lips all but pressing his.

Crying aloud, he caught her to him. For one mad moment he crushed her to his breast and rained kisses on her lips passionately and insanely. The white arms were locked about his neck. He looked into her eyes, and for a second he wavered. Then his manlier self came back with a swift revulsion.

He wrenched himself free and thrust her back so fiercely that she fell sobbing across the cushioned couch.

With full control of his senses once more, he went again to the door. With his hand upon the knob, he turned. "Did you ever see Parsifal?" he asked, coldly.

"Yes," Rita said, looking through her tears.

"Then you know whom you shall always be to me after this."

"Whom?" she asked, although she knew.

"Kundry."

The girl buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CARL was dazed and stricken with the emotion of the night as he wandered somewhat aimlessly through the streets. He wanted to tramp unceasingly in the damp night air till its cooling breath should drive the fever from his brain. His feet but partly obeyed his will, and at a corner he staggered into a burly figure coming the opposite way.

"Look out!" exclaimed a strangely familiar voice. "Are you drunk, or do you own these blessed trails?"

"Bland!" cried Carl, incredulously.

Jerry Bland peered at him through the dusk. "It's Carl!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter? You never drink. Are you sick?"

"Yes, I am sick, Jerry," answered Glover in a weary tone. "I am sick of myself and of the world."

"Tell me about it," his friend urged.

"Tell me first why you are here. I thought you were in the Maritime Provinces."

"I came back last week," Bland explained. "Father has Cobalt fever like the rest. He wants to invest, and he would come up to look over the ground. I had to accompany him. So here I am rolling about the rocks when I should be home helping the Argonauts trim the

Hamilton Tigers. Now, what is wrong? If there is anything I can do, Carl, you know you may depend upon me."

In a broken voice Carl briefly related his experience.

"You poor chap!" Bland exclaimed, laying an arm across his shoulders. "You came through all right."

"Barely!" said Carl. "I must get away, Jerry."

"Where?"

"Anywhere! It does not matter. I want to lose myself."

"Clive told me of your engagement to Jean. You will go to her. She will forgive."

"Go to her!" Carl exclaimed. "Go to her with the touch of that siren's arms on my neck and the scorch of her kisses on my lips? Bland, I would die first."

"Carl, you are making a mistake," Jerry said, anxiously.

"I have already made the mistake," Carl bitterly returned. "The cost of it is my life's happiness. Do me this favor, Jerry, when you return home. Go out to the Humber and tell Clive what I have recounted to you. Bid him tell it all to Jean. I would write, but I cannot bring myself to pen a line. I feel that she would curse me for every word of it. Will you do that much for me?"

"Yes, but I know it means the world to you both. Why do you not go and tell her yourself? I know she will forgive you."

"Forgive!" Carl cried, desolately. "I can see Jean Thurston's pure face when Clive tells her that the man she loves has broken a bank over the gaming table and has held another woman in his arms. No human pride could forgive that."

"I believe you are wrong," Bland persisted.

"I am right, Jerry. My going will save her the ordeal of a renunciation and a separation. For that at least she will thank me."

"You are determined to leave at daybreak?"

"I shall go on the first train. I cannot say where my destination will be. I have not the least idea. There is one thing more. Tell Jean's father, Clive, and all the rest down there, that if they hear of a company called 'Consolidated Diamond Cobalt' they must not invest a cent in it. The company is a fraud. Will you remember that?"

"Yes," Bland promised. His intentions at the time were of the best, but that very injunction afterwards slipped his memory.

No words of farewell were spoken, but two sinewed hands met in a mighty grip more eloquent than any speech.

There was a blinding pain of tears across Carl's eyes as he stumbled on.

BOOK TWO.

CHAPTER I.

Over the foothills of south-western Alberta night was already sending its creeping messengers of shadow. On Ben Doan's ranch two men were riding campward.

"Well," said the veteran Westerner, Kirby, to his companion, "what do you think of Doan's acres?"

"Grand!" he replied. "Why the ranches I have seen aren't patches to this." It was the tenderfoot's first day out.

"Right! You have it there. This is the real thing. It is different from the others. The life is different, too. After you have been here a few weeks, you will know for yourself. All the thick-backed novels dealing with ranch life and murdering cowboys will be knocked out of you. We are a rough lot, that's true! But we are not sack-legged, foul-mouthed, shooting horrors, riding cayuses through open saloon doors, and all that sort of thing! You have seen that staged and printed?"

"Yes," the tenderfoot replied, "many a time!"

"That will all go," the grizzled cattleman said. "You will see new and real life, and I hope you will

like it. I am boss till Doan gets back, and I'll try to give you some pointers. Rather set you up to the game! We'll use you just as well as Bar K can do it. Rough, hard work, with danger thrown in, is the bill day after day, but you look fit. You're from Ontario, you said. You're educated, I know."

"Yes, I am from the East."

"You said your name was—what? I've forgotten it again."

"Hooper! Charles Hooper."

"Sure! We once had a man of that name. 'Dare-devil' Hooper, he was called. He went with Jim Darcy, ranch head before me, when Jim started herds of his own," Kirby said. "Darcy was a dickens of a good man, and I'll have to step long to fill his tracks."

"You were scarce of men when I drifted along?"

"Deuced scarce!" Kirby declared. "And the scarcity continues—unless Doan manages to bring another man. You were a godsend, Hooper, for you can ride, but unless we get another extra hand, some dirty night we'll be losing steers. And that doesn't pay in these days of last ranges and gobbling railroads! Hello! there goes the grub-call! Now, sprint, you tenderfoot, sprint!"

And the man called Hooper sprinted, and to Kirby's amazement outsprinted him, and leaped off before him at the chuck-wagon. Evidently the tenderfoot was a tenderfoot who could take care of himself.

The night he joined the Bar K outfit Doan's gang was holding the herds on the South Bend. Most unholy heat had shriveled the bunch-grass brown, and muddy coulees were all that was left for water supply, Smoke River being stone dry. It had been killing work keeping the beasts under control those last few days, for they had the roaming thirst both figuratively and literally, especially at night, when oftentimes river-bred winds from over the British Columbian border drifted in damp and moist to tantalize their hot nostrils. Some prayed for rain. Some cursed for it. All wanted it.

The season was heavy. The herds were uncommonly hard to handle, and all ranches would have taken on extra men if they could have got them. Bar K suffered most on account of the shortage of hands. Doan had signed up Hooper on sight when he came straying through the district; and thus given hope of acquiring enough riding-strength to finish out the year, he had the very next day pushed through to Wetaskiwin to bring back by hook or by crook something of the masculine brand.

CHAPTER II.

"THAT pony Mona outen Kirby's string has sure got some speed, hain't she?" panted old Joe Blake, as he swung off his own mount and led it in beside Hooper's at Coyote Coulee, which was the camp watering place.

It was breezeless sunset of the third day, and Hooper had beaten Blake to water as easily as he had beaten Kirby to supper two evenings before.

"Of course you couldn't say that the tenderfoot astride her had any speed," Hooper grinned, amiably, patting the lithe mare that raised a dripping nose to nuzzle him.

Blake snorted. "Huh! This flat gallopin' is easy. Ye better wait till ye git in a crazy herd, or gluin' yerself to a buckin' pinto. Then we'll see! Anyway, bet ye a silk bandana I kin beat ye to the corral. Hold on, though! Who's lopin' it here now?"

It was Ben Doan loping it, and they backed off the narrow trail to let him go into the coulee. Dust and sweat covered him and his horse, and he led by rein another animal showing the same signs of travel.

"Did ye git a man?" was Blake's first greeting.

"Sure," answered Doan, smiling with tired satisfac-

tion. "Richard Haswell, soon to become Dick! Easterner. Tenderfoot, too!"

"Another! exclaimed old Joe, chortling. "Say, Doan, are ye runnin' a Western Instruction Farm? But, by Jove," he added to Hooper, "it's lucky for yerself. Ye're promoted. See? Ye're only second tenderfoot, which is next to old-timer. The first tenderfoot gits the plaguin' now. He's *the* tenderfoot."

"Glad of it," laughed Hooper.

"Been breaking you in, have they?" commented Doan.

"We sure have," Blake declared, "and it's an easy job, if the oldest puncher does say it. But *the* tenderfoot! How's he? I reckon he's soft!"

"He can ride and shoot," said the ranch-owner. "He told me he learned that in South Africa some years ago. He seemed hard up and accepted my first offer. I was glad enough to close the bargain. He swung on my extra pony, and we came in like jack-rabbits. Searles, Drisden, and some others were in looking for help. I hustled my man out and gave him no chance to jump his contract. He seemed willing enough, though. He'll go next you two on the night shift."

"Wall," old Joe drawled, "I s'pose it will mean more work for us, but somebody has to do it. Heh?"

"Yes, he'll learn more from you. Call the whole camp if there is any storm. It's going to rain before daylight."

The sun had vanished in a cloud-bank high up above the prairie horizon, and long "wet streaks" told the plainsmen that rain was not far off. They hoped in the bottom of their hearts that it would come quietly. Thunder and lightning meant certain stampede, more certain because of the irritated condition of the cattle.

Nine o'clock found the first night shift on duty. The tenderfoot was next old Joe, and Hooper held the position on his other side. The night was dark. Far off in the direction of the hills the thunder faintly rumbled. Scudding clouds alternately hid and revealed the stars.

Hooper smelled the shifting breeze. It was moist. Rain could not be far away. The tenderfoot's first night on guard promised to be an unpleasant one. Hooper could see that he sat his beast well as he rode out with old Joe. The animal was a finely trained one of Ben's, and the contented way in which Minnie carried him vouched for his horsemanship, since the mare could tell a rider from a lubber the minute he put foot in the stirrup. Ben had decked him out in puncher's garb. The lariat was correctly coiled at the saddle-horn. Black pistol-butts stuck out of his holsters, these weapons being now used only for protecting the herds from marauding wolves and also for shooting into the faces of a stampeding bunch when nothing else will turn them. Hooper took up his position, and he could hear old Joe giving him some instructions as to what to do.

"Kin ye tune up any?" was the former's parting question.

"What?" the stranger asked.

"Sing! Kin ye sing?"

"A little," Haswell replied.

"Wall, then," Joe advised, "if them beasts gits oneasy, let yer lungs out a bit. Seems something all-fired comfortin' in a man's voice for them. They like it, 'specially when they're a leetle oneasy."

And, indeed, they seemed uneasy from the start. Perhaps they smelled the brewing storm. Perhaps their brute instinct prophesied the crash and roar of a thunder tempest. They had to keep their guard keenly, and Hooper could hear some of the more distant on the shift lilting snatches of old refrains to soothe the herds. All at once the tenderfoot broke out in song with the clearest tenor voice he ever heard. That voice would have made him a fortune at any American or European opera, and Hooper wondered how in all the blessed roads of destiny he had drifted out here. His words pealed out like the notes of a clarionet and one could catch every syllable. The milling herds became more quiet even at the first bar of his tune. It was a love song, and Hooper could hear him plainly as he trilled the lines:

"Can I forget those words you spoke,
The love you gave to me,
That night of old when stars awoke
And lit the silent sea?—"

Here his tones ceased abruptly, and Hooper could hear only a low, muffled whistling, as if he were bending to adjust the girth or change a stirrup. The horse's faint footfalls on the prairie sod stopped for an instant.

But in a moment the flute-like notes came out again:

"Ah! no, though seas our paths divide
And set us far apart,
Still every vow we ever sighed
Is treasured in my heart——"

Then his voice went up in golden richness to heights that would have turned some of the boosted Eastern soloists green with envy. It went up repeating the last line:

"Is treasured in my heart."

As he launched into the chorus, his tone grew to indescribable sweetness, and Hooper involuntarily checked his pony.

"Stars may forget to shine out in the blue;
Seas may forget the shore;
But I shall remember your love and you
For ever and evermore."

A second time the chorus stole up through the still air. There followed another verse sung softer than ever:

"Can I forget those golden—"

Silence!—then smack, smack! Haswell's quirt sounded on Minnie's flank. She must have shied from

a breaking steer or stepped into a gopher-mine. It was a trick of hers to try the seat of a fresh rider who handled her firmly. Judging from the sound of the whip and her regular hoof-beats afterwards, the mare would not be apt to again attempt any pleasantries.

The tenderfoot resumed his song:

"Can I forget those golden years,
And all they were to me?
Ah! no, how could I blot with tears
So sweet a memory!
I think of you, but never weep
For all that might have been;
It is the unshed tears that keep
Love's mem'ry fresh and green—
Love's mem'ry fresh—and—green!
Stars may forget to shine out in the blue;
Seas may forget the shore;
But I shall remember your love and you
For ever and evermore."

The pathos in his tune and the mystic charm of his voice lulled Hooper into a reverie. He had been hard pressed for a day or so, and was pretty nearly fagged. His horse made the rounds mechanically without guidance, and he let himself lie forward on the pommel of the saddle. His thoughts went back East under the influence of Haswell's song. Memories dear to him thronged upon his wearied senses, and before he knew it he was asleep—sleeping on duty!

CHAPTER III.

A SPLITTING crack that seemed to pierce his ear-drums and a roaring like some tremendous waterfall woke him. The stampede was on. He brought the braided lash down with all his strength, and the startled pony shot in, for she had edged away from the beat while he slept.

Lurid chains of lightning slit the inky pall above, and for one minute he saw an ocean of swaying backs and tossing horns, with black mites of riders reeling on their track.

The whole herd was headed for Smoke River, and unless they were turned from that course, not one steer would be alive when the men found them, for a deep ravine, the Devil's Drift, lay this side of it. In the black night they would all go over.

Thunderbolts came, peal on peal, and the awful anger of the heavens shook the earth almost as much as the thousands of pounding hoofs under maddened cattle. The electric blaze showed Hooper he had gained on the others. A few minutes more and he reached them. They were riding well up to the front on both sides. Old Joe was off to his right. He could not tell who rode on his left. Old Joe was cursing furiously and

putting the broncho to the last inch of its speed. It took Hooper all his time to stay with him, but they drew ahead. On, on they plunged through driving rain and pitch darkness, cut every second by steel-blue flame which showed the black, hammered mud underfoot, and etched the whirling mass ahead in a thrilling yet terrible picture. On and on with no sound but the mingled roar of the stampede and storm before, and the splat! splat! of their horses' hoofs beneath. At last old Joe broke into speech.

"Curse it!" he groaned. "We'll never do it!"

In fact, Hooper saw the truth of his emphatic statement soon. The herd was leaving them. The irregular ground compelled them to pull in, and the clay over which they were passing was filled with prairie-dogs' holes. It was more than a man's life was worth to speed here. A false step meant a broken neck. They had left the others of their band hopelessly in the rear, and they rode simply because there was nothing else to do but keep the flank of the stampede in sight.

When they struck better ground they let out again, but almost at the same time hoof-thuds sounded behind coming like the wind.

"Who's that?" Hooper snapped, for though they were going their limit he was overhauling them.

"Dunno! Kingd'm cum if he hits a mine!" Joe exclaimed.

But he didn't hit a mine, and in a moment more he swung in with them. It was the tenderfoot.

"Would have caught you before, but I broke a rein," he jerked out.

"You would?" Hooper bawled, a little nettled. "Where'd you learn to ride?"

"On the veldt!"

A horrible detonation thundered above. A zigzag tongue of flame shot through space straight upon the mass of cattle. Three dead steers lay in their path, and the ponies jumped them. The renewed fury of the elements lashed the animals into a frenzy, and they gained a little.

Old Joe whipped his beast. "Ride, boys, ride! We've one chance to head them this side of the slough."

They sprang to it, gaining yard by yard. Smoke River could not be far distant, and Hooper recollected that a little slough lay on the near side of the drift. This must be it. The rear was reached. Neck after neck, long-horned and fear-tossed, showed with each blaze of the sky. Up on the flank their ponies drove, nearer and nearer the head.

"Ride, boys, ride!" old Joe roared, and he seemed to surge his beast right to the fore. Then like a flash the pony's front quarters doubled, recovered, and slid helpless with a forefoot strained by a gopher-hole.

"We'll try for it!" Hooper shouted, as they left him, but the words died. His girth eased and broke! He went off backward, saddle and all. Haswell thundered by. Half raised on his elbow, Hooper saw he meant to go on.

"Hold on!" he screamed. "You can't do it alone. Halt!" But Haswell was past and away.

"Watch Devil's Drift!" Hooper roared, with hands as a trumpet, when he was gone. It was just a chance whether he had been told or not.

All heaven opened in a last sheet of glaring crimson and white light. Hooper saw the mass once more with the tenderfoot right on the edge of the leaders. Blessed saints, how he could ride! Beyond was the first grey rise of the Drift, where the sage-bushes rimmed the long divide. The thunder cannonaded again and ceased. Pitch blackness settled on everything, while the rain teemed.

He whistled to his horse, and, although pretty well bruised up, tried to fasten the saddle on again. By the time he had improvised a girth with his lariat, the torrent from the clouds stopped. Sullenly the black scars of vapor parted, and a white-faced moon looked through on the sodden scene below. About to mount, he stopped. Crack! Crack! Crack! came from the direction of Devil's Drift. He was shooting into their faces. One, two, three, four, five, six! Hooper counted. A half-minute's silence! Then one, two, three, four, five, six shots he counted again. His cylinders were empty. Not another sound was heard on that side. Hooper caught the thud of approaching riders behind, and springing on Mona's back, he galloped for the Drift. His seat was none too secure, and the band hammered

up to him as he reached the rise of the canyon. Not a steer was in sight!

"Hell!" Ben cried. "They're over."

For a minute they thought he was right, but Fellars, on Hooper's left, spied the wide trail circling as it approached the chasm.

"No, by George!" he shouted. "The tenderfoot has turned them! Look there!"

In the moonlight they could see the track plainly. It circled little by little, skirting the very edge of Devil's Drift, and turned off to the prairie some yards farther on.

They galloped out, following hard, and in an hour they ran them down by some cottonwoods. They had puffed themselves to exhaustion, and it was with little effort the men had them milling quietly. There they held them, riding round and round.

In the excitement of the capture nobody thought of Haswell until they had made several rounds, when Hooper called to Ben: "Where's the tenderfoot?"

"Couldn't have followed them, I guess! Must have cut back to meet us and missed us in the dark! Where's old Joe?"

"He spoiled his pony," Hooper said, "just before my girth broke!"

It was full morning when they got the herds back to Bar K. A tired-looking Joe rode out on a new pony to meet them. When he saw the bunch coming, he threw up his hat and shouted.

"Hurrah!" he roared. "Hurrah! Who turned 'em?"

"The tenderfoot!" Ben said.

"Where is he? Call him out! By Jove, he gets a year's pay for this. Call him out!"

"Call nuthin'," Joe said, blankly. "He ain't here."

"What?" they chorused.

"Hain't here! Ain't he with ye?"

It dawned on them all at once, and Hooper heard Ben give a groan. Hooper's limbs were so stiff from his fall and long ride that he had to go to bed, but the boys, after being all night in the saddle, went straight back to Devil's Drift. He was stone dead when they took him out. The bodies of four steers were lying near him in the rocky bottom, and his two Colts, both emptied, they found close by.

The sight of the little cavalcade coming in at noon was one not to be forgotten. Haswell's form was terribly mangled, but the features were still perfect and full of tenderness. They wondered what was the last thought that had moulded them so.

Over in Wetaskiwin he was buried in a quiet corner of the cemetery, and Ben erected a handsome monument above the grave. There were no letters or papers on him to give a clue to any friends in the East, but four days later the mail came in from the town to Ben's ranch.

In one of the Eastern papers which his friends had sent Ben, Hooper happened upon the solution to the

puzzle. Boldly headlined among the gossip of a society journal was a paragraph which ran something like this:

"The Count and Countess Castiella, formerly Miss Brenda Steene, sailed to-day for their home in Italy. It will be remembered with interest that Miss Steene was engaged to be married in August of last year to the M—— opera tenor, Richard Luscave, whose family name is Haswell. Before the wedding took place, the titled count appeared in the city. An acquaintance turned to an intimacy, and that to an infatuation. He offered his hand and rank to Miss Steene. The temptation of becoming a countess proved stronger than her love. The former engagement was broken, and she now enjoys a position among the highest families of the sunny province, whether one of happiness we will not say."

The account ran on and on, but that was enough. Hooper was reading it over his midday meal, and handed the paper to Ben.

"Ye saints!" said Ben. "A title for a man! The blind minx!"

"Ben's words recalled Haswell's song:

"I think of you, but never weep
For all that might have been;
It is the unshed tears that keep
Love's mem'ry fresh and green.
Stars may forget to shine out in the blue;
Seas may forget the shore;
But I shall remember your love and you
For ever and evermore."

"Ah!" exclaimed Hooper, "the ever is over. Now he has the evermore."

"Yes," the rancher sighed. "There's no doubt but Haswell was hard up against the unluckiest thing in this world. Poor beggar!"

"Poor beggar!" the other man echoed. "Perhaps the evermore was best for him. Fate plays strangely with our lives." He gave such a deep sigh that Doan looked at him keenly.

"Perhaps the second tenderfoot is a parallel case?" he ventured, gently.

The second tenderfoot looked him squarely in the eye.

"Doan," he said, "of course you know my name is not Hooper."

"Yes," the rancher answered. "I thought it was not."

"You also know that there are times when we want to get away from all we have known and lived in, and from everything that was."

"There are times. Yes, there are times," Doan said. "I don't want your secrets. I am sorry for you, Hooper. I am sorry for you, and there's my hand on it."

The cattleman reached him a brawny fist of steel, rein seared and alkali-burned, and as they went out of camp for the afternoon Carl knew there was at least one sound man in the vast prairie region where he had lost himself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ranch life on Bar K, of which life he was a part, was indeed, as Kirby had said it would be, a revelation to Carl. He learned the life, the men, and the country as they lived and moved. He found that cowboys were human, feeling, whole-hearted fellows, and not swashbuckling pirates of land type. They were rough, of a truth, and they were engaged in hazardous work. They took their lives in their hands many times in a season, but the brave hearts bred by the sun of open plain and singing wind of foothill were the tenderest in comradeship he had ever known. Carl saw the strength of the iron arms as they roped a breaking steer or subdued a fiery broncho, and he saw the softness of the same arms as they soothed the pain from some sick comrade's frame.

These knights of the plains were giants in body and heart, great fearless men, who had their faults as all have, but who, in having them, touched the human heart and claimed its worship. The name of the Deity fell over-freely from their lips, but that was because in the large, free life as roamers across mighty stretches of God's unbroken gardens they came so close to Him. They knew His presence and power not in fine points of ecclesiastical controversy, but in the scorching blight of

summer drought, in tempest blasts through bending cottonwoods, and in the lurid lightning's gaze upon the rain-soaked prairie breadth. The glittering mirage was the mirror of His splendor and subtlety. Grim canyon depths were to them His awe-inspiring unfathomability. The winter mountain-storms showed His awful strength. The Chinook wind was God's sweetest mercy!

Among them Carl could have been almost happy had it not been for the thought of Jean, which stabbed him with a sickening pang at times. The work, the rush, the excitement, and danger, made him forget all else but her, for he put his heart into it, as he always did, no matter upon what he was engaged.

Of course he had it all to learn. It was all new, rough and hard, but Carl went in with such vim, courage, and staying power, taking knocks and hardships without a murmur, that admiration for the plucky tyro grew among the cattlemen. There would come a time very shortly, they told themselves, when the tyro would make even the old hands look to their honors. Possessed of indomitable spirit and trained athletic muscles, Carl was no mean figure where strength told. Besides, he was of quickest perception and readiest resource. What he lacked in experience was made up for in a measure by skill and brain work. He learned it all little by little, from sticking to the back of a bucking pony to poking dizzy files of broad-backed cattle up the chutes to waiting cars at the shipping

depots. Carl learned to eat and sleep in the saddle when necessary. He learned to lasso, to corral, to brand, to camp, and cook, and to do everything needful in a cattleman's life. He loved the life in its hazardous and strenuous trend.

The spirit of the plain was in him as the days passed. The plunge of his horse was a joy to him, and the feel of having sides between his knees came to be a second nature. His slouching sombrero fitted as never Eastern headgear had. The knotted kerchief round his neck was more manly than any linen in vogue. The nerves of his fingers greeted the braided rein and heavy quirt as if they had never known a different touch. The real living hours of the days on the long divides were equalled only by the nights in tented camps before the red coals' glow. Carl grew to it all like a son of the ranch. He forgot what he would forget, except when a sunny-haired, blue-eyed girl came in dream form to him. Then the old remorse welled up again, and he cursed his weakness of the past. Out here on the vast, lone prairie, he seemed so strong and so scornful of all that was other than clean and white.

CHAPTER V.

Bland went down into the Humber country as soon as possible after he had parted from his old comrade. There he related everything to Clive Halycon as Carl bade him do.

Clive gasped in amazement. "He is gone?" was his helpless question.

"Gone!" Jerry said. "I tried to show him that he was wrong. He should have come to her. He thought she would never wish to see his face again. He would die first—that is what he said—die first rather than come to her."

One evening when Clive found Jean alone, he told her. She listened without a word, without a sob, till he had finished. Then Jean rose, and Clive read her eyes aright and went.

With weak steps the girl sought her room, and there the floodgates of grief gave way. She threw herself upon the bed and wept in paroxysms of sorrow, praying to heaven for strength and guidance.

In that chamber, where the roof-gables held their panes to the west, a light could have been seen all the long night hours if anyone of the peacefully sleeping countryside had been abroad. Inside was such a strug-

gle, wrestling, and prayer as perhaps but one had known before. That one was Carl in the night when he had fought the demon of play.

When the moon lay low on the horizon, she stood with her tears, looking out through the silvered glass, and the victory was in her grasp, the victory of a woman's heart.

"Carl, Carl," she murmured, in broken accents. "It is much, but I can forgive. For the sake of my love and yours I can forgive. Carl, Carl, if you had only come!"

Then in the course of another day she went to Clive.

"Clive," she said, "you will find him?"

Halycon took her hands in both of his and promised.

"I will find him, Jean," he declared, "if anyone can. I shall say you still care and want him. Is that all?"

"Yes," she whispered. "Tell him it is all my life. Oh! Clive, he must come. You will make him. If his pride or shame refuses, you must find a way to bring him. Can you do it?"

"I will," Clive promised. "I will find him, and he shall come back."

Leaving his farm in care of the men, Clive went at once. It seemed likely to him that Carl had gone somewhere in the great West. On inquiring at North Bay, where Glover was known to the agents, he found this suggestion to be correct. His friend had purchased a ticket for Winnipeg, and he was only a week or so behind him. Clive followed immediately, but he had

entered on a vain chase. He traced him to the great Western city, and there he lost the trail, and by no effort, however great, did he regain it. He searched systematically in all the cities and towns on or near the lines of railroad even out to the Coast, but it was of no use. He inquired everywhere that he thought a man of Carl's attainments might be drawn. It was all to no avail. The eagerness and earnestness of the search was inspired by the thought of how much it meant to Jean Thurston and the promise he had made. He searched and searched, travelled and travelled, sparing no expense to achieve his end, yet he got no trace of Carl. From many ranchers who happened to be in the towns through which he passed Clive procured the names of the men they employed. It might just be a chance that his comrade has drifted to one of the ranges. At Wetaskiwin he met Darcy, who gave him the names of his own men, and those of Doan's, whose ranch was near his. Among these latter names was the one, Charles Hooper, but it conveyed no recognition to Clive.

Thus it went on. He met all sorts of people in all sorts of places, and asked the same question thousands of times. In those wanderings an event took place in his life which changed everything for him. He met—the woman! Clive, who had never known what some term that grand passion, and who had told Carl that he should never care in that way for anyone, had met his fate at last.

It was in Banff that he came upon her, a girl from the East, and a native of Ottawa. She had spent the summer in Banff and had not as then returned home. From the first he was keenly attached, and he lingered and lingered there. His mission of search gave him an excuse, and the month's absence upon which he had calculated stretched out into three. Then came a rude awakening, the announcement of her intending departure. Spurred by the thought, Clive risked all and told her of his love in that dreamy heaven-spot of Western Canada. That was the moment, the moment of telling, when this new, wild rapture born within him turned to bitter yearning. Alice Blendon loved him, too, but that was the end. Her word was given to another, one for whom she thought she had cared till Clive came into her world.

His dream was over. The harmony of his being was spoiled for ever. That was the reward of his search for Carl. He took back home with him a deep yearning and agony. Whether it was greater for Jean Thurston than for himself he could not say, but as he saw the color leaving her cheeks and the light fading from her grand eyes day by day, Clive thought it must be more bitter for her.

Yet faith is faith! Alice Blendon's word was pledged to one Charles Hooper, of Ottawa. Clive would no more have thought of asking her to break the engagement than Alice Blendon would have thought of

requesting a release. Word of honor was sacred to her and to Clive.

Furthermore, in this pitiable situation, Fate's strange whim had influence. By chance Carl had chosen the name, Charles Hooper, to hide his identity in the West. Thus there were two men named Charles Hooper, the real one of Ottawa and the false one on Doan's ranch.

CHAPTER VI.

THROUGH boldly displayed advertising, tremendous booming, and the shrewd machinations of Jasper & Jasper, soilcitors, the Consolidated Diamond Cobalt Company forced its stock to the first place among paper mines and even among real mines. The shares were offered at twenty-five cents. The form of advertising was unchallengeable. The authorized capital was given. The names of the directors were boldly typed. A statement of the development to date and the proposed development with new capital for which the first shares were offered accompanied a mining engineer's glowing report of the riches contained in this property. It gave the values of assays which had been made. It invited inspection, and, indeed, some intending investors did visit the place. They found the development as stated and everything as claimed. There were bags of ore packed ready for shipment. There was every indication that the mine was producing and that with increased capital there were fortunes in it. Some drifting had been done, but it was on veins which existed only in imagination and in the mining engineer's report. The engineer, by the way, was a barber from some part which is of no consequence. The mine of the Consoli-

dated Diamond Cobalt was a salted mine, and salted by men old at the game.

Because it told its falsehoods in the biggest, boldest, and blackest type, and buoyed up these falsehoods with indisputable evidence which was in reality only a blacker lie, the Consolidated got the boom for which it had hoped and worked.

Many a man was induced to put varying amounts into this stock. Among them was one Henry Thurston. Throughout the neighborhood that knew him Thurston was counted as a wise and cautious man, but wiser and more cautious men have fallen into the same predicament. He invested largely like many others. It was about this time that Thurston first met Jasper. The lawyer had come down to the village on the Humber's banks for the purpose of collecting old accounts which his avaricious mind would not allow him to forget. He was bleeding thousands with his Cobalt swindle, yet he could not overlook the village poor who, in their extremities, had come under his lending thumb at one time or another.

Henry Thurston sought him out to inquire into the Consolidated, knowing Jasper was the solicitor. Needless to say, the lawyer's smooth tongue convinced him that his investments were quite safe and persuaded him to put more into the stock at the first opportunity. Thurston invited him to his home, and there the lawyer for the first time set eyes on Jean. Such love as his

narrow soul was capable of was stirred up in that visit. He made it a point to have more than one business call to the Humber village, and his visits at the Thurston home became quite frequent. Judging the time ripe, according to his professional instinct, he, with all due ceremony, presented his suit. To his shame and chagrin it was quietly refused. Subsequent advances were decisively cut short.

Jasper was forced to swallow his baffled pride and desires, but he never thought of giving up his end because of one defeat. Thus far in his career all things had come to him if he waited, and used his hook-or-by-crook tactics. For this he would wait.

The one rival, Whitmore, still visiting in the country, and the only one who seemed in his way, was removed by a few meaning words. Jasper told him plainly, when he saw in what direction the other's attentions lay, that if he did not want his real character spread over the place he had better spend his thoughts and time elsewhere. Whitmore knew that the lawyer could and would do what he said. He was in possession of all facts connected with him, for Jasper, with his brother, had been his defence in the scrape which ended his college career. In view of this, Whitmore thought it wise to use discretion and left the scene. He knew Jasper's methods and actions were such as would cause any honest person to despise them, yet he had no substantial accusation to bring against the lawyer.

For the time being Jasper had the upper hand. The investment of Henry Thurston gave him a pretext for still visiting the house to talk over the prospects of Consolidated Diamond Cobalt. Thus, though secretly wishing to avoid Jasper, Jean was frequently brought in contact with him.

CHAPTER VII.

On Doan's ranch the autumn months passed swiftly for Glover, and by the time the first frosts held northerly lakes in their grip and sent waterfowl down to congregate in noisy throngs on southerly sloughs, he prided himself on being a seasoned cattleman. And because of the success of his adaptation the ranch might have held him to the end had it not been for the coming of the white death.

The white death! In balmy southern Alberta they shudder at remembrance of that visitation, the trampling visitation of snows in excess. It was unaccustomed, unlooked for, abnormal. Over regions where the grass was always green through the whole mild winter, the fierce, frost-mailed blizzard rode on his depredations.

In early fall ranchers saw whistling lines of teal and mallard go by, saw honking phalanxes of geese and brant point southward far earlier than usual. They saw and wondered at the sign. Next came night frosts that blackened the reeds and sealed the sloughs. In the midst of these sloughs loomed muskrat houses extra-domed for warmth. Then down from the north the blinding, choking, soul-dismaying white death surged. Rivers and lakes were iron-bound, while the grazing

grounds were as if carved of rock. Snow lay seven feet deep on the level, and the terrified herds floundered through it before the lashing tempests.

Chinook winds, as if in mercy, poured in, and the billowy drifts melted like magic till the prairies ran with water and cattle bellowed gratefully along the gulches. But as suddenly the frost swung back to settle a mantle of ice over the bunchgrass. Again came the snow, deeper than ever, and both ice and snow prevented the famished beasts from reaching their natural food. Days and days the blizzard raged, the snow hissed in almost horizontal lines, long lines with stings at the tips of them like thrown spears; and before this prolonged fury the cattle began to drift, and to perish as they drifted. Weak members of the herd, gaunt old mothers, dropped first; then the yearlings; then the strong, wild-eyed steers.

In vain the ranchers strove to stop them. The drift went on and on. At Bar K Carl and the rest of Doan's men rode on the heels of the herd cutting them out, endeavoring to save at least the hardiest animals, but it was no use. For a time they held a portion to their limits, facing the knifing blizzard and freezing cold, while ponies beneath them shuddered and sunk their tails. The cowmen rode their rounds, rimed with frost, shrouded with snow, feeding the now ravenous beasts what little fodder had been laid by. When that pittance was exhausted it was no longer possible to hold them. The storm-harried, hunger-maddened steers

broke for freedom and wandered blindly away to the south, seeking the fodder and shelter they could never find. Pawing down to the earth and stamping the ice off with their hoofs, the moaning beasts would sometimes seize a mouthful of grass, but for the most part the snow-blanket and the ice-lid shut them away.

Steadily, cruelly, unceasingly, the white death took its toll. Cattle died faster than if some plague had fallen. From remote points came tales of lone ranchers, hardiest of the breed, succumbing to the insatiable blizzard's power. Fuel was scarce, and the timbered hills were almost inaccessible on account of drifts deep enough to bury men and horses. Suffering was rife, but to fully realize that suffering one had to live through it. Glover lived through it—and realized. He saw the dumb brutes die by scores, fear of this hitherto unknown scourge in their sunken eyes. He saw them drift, drift to the lee of the stabbing storm, always to the lee, seeking cover. They would wander out on the railway cuts for shelter from the wind behind great walls of snow which the snowploughs had thrown up. There they would huddle, refusing to move from an approaching train till the pilot mowed through their ranks. Other enemies they had, too—grey, slinking forms that stole out of the timber and sat in a circle around the helpless herds till the most helpless steer fell. Then these waiting cowards would rush in when the hoof could no longer strike or the horn no longer rend. Often Carl's long-barrelled pistols opened on

these grey cravens, sending them loping for the timber, but he knew that at night they would creep back to complete the feast.

Thus all the winter months the white death swept the ranches. Out of all Ben Doan's magnificent herds a few score skeleton beasts survived. With a grim, stern face set like a mask Doan swallowed the bitter medicine of loss and paid off his men. Carl came east as far as North Bay, where he found the spring rush of prospectors going up into the Cobalt country at its height.

Not even the potent call of the prairie, the mighty lure of the West, had sufficed to purge his blood of the Cobalt fever. He, too, turned his face to the north.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the first spring month wrapped wild Temiskaming in green, a lone prospector wandered among the northerly regions up near the head-tributaries of Montreal River. He pushed farther north than the late rich finds on that same water, driving his canoe through long, tortuous rapids which would have dismayed any other man, and portaging over rough miles of broken way that no other person would have attempted. But the solitary seeker, strong-framed as he was, gloried in the obstacles in his path. He gloried in the battle of the rapid and the muscle-straining toil of the portage. The lone life was the life he wished for, and in his limbs was the search-fever, the subtle, forceful fever which always prompted and ever lured with thought of unearthing hidden wealth. With him he had a pick, a shovel, a hand drill, some pounds of blasting powder, blankets in which to sleep, and provisions to last weeks if augmented by fish and game. He went with more knowledge of what to find and how to find it than many who have posed as practical prospectors all their lives. Moreover, he went to win! Through the sweet spring months he pursued the invis-

ible silver-god who ever evaded his grasp. High hope of morning faded to sullen disappointment at eve as each day filed by, and the man would roll himself in his blankets within his tent of boughs against the timber or under his upturned canoe on the shore, sick and weary of the quest that brought nothing but emptiness.

Spring merged into summer, and beneath the hot sun that held the still air thick and stifling between the rocky walls of gorges and sent the fly-pestered moose to plunge his body in shallow, marshy borders of lake or river, the lone prospector still persevered in his toil and search. Each evening he took the sinking weight of disappointment into slumber and forgot it. In the fresh, cool hours of dawn his blood rushed strong, and there was no thought of past failure. The man went a-seeking with renewed energy, hopeful and exultant of the end. He wound still farther north into the heart of the wild. Only those who had themselves pushed far knew of the lone prospector who had gone beyond them, but when the rich strikes on the Montreal River grew into prominence the doings of all the bands or single searchers operating or staking claims in that vicinity were recorded in the Cobalt weekly letters.

Bland, who had never given up the idea that Carl was somewhere in the mining-grounds of the vast region of Temiskaming, or farther west on the Superior shore, watched these reports eagerly for any hint which might disclose his friend's whereabouts.

One day he talked with Lewis, who had staked claims near the late finds on the Montreal. Lewis was one of the few who had seen the lone prospector of the northland, and he was telling Bland of the nervy seeker who had gone with his outfit into the difficult country beyond their camps. He did not know his name, but his partner did. The partner was down in the American cities just then, trying to interest capitalists in their strike in order to get financial backing. However, Lewis had seen him and gave Bland a description of him. Jerry slapped his thighs with exultation.

"Jove!" he cried. "It's Carl. I'll bet a big C bank-note that it's Carl!"

Immediately Halycon got the following summons:

"It beats the deuce, Clive! Carl's up in the north, prospecting. I knew he never went west. That North Bay agent must have been blind on the night he said he sold a ticket to him. I saw Lewis from the new camps on the Montreal, and he told me of a lone prospector who had gone in beyond them. He didn't know his name, but the description just suits Carl. Come at once, old boy! Come prepared to do the hardest canoeing and portaging you've ever done in your life—even harder than the three of us did on that Maine moose-hunt! Do you remember it? Lewis says it is deuced rough, but come, and come quickly. We will follow him and bring him back if we have to tie him down."

Clive lost not a moment in acquainting Jean of this

news, and the glad light that sprang to her eyes would have been enough to make him go even if he had not already made that resolve.

He left to his men the reaping of the harvest, took his tried canoe and camp outfit from the garret, and, shipping it ahead from Toronto, set out for Cobalt.

CHAPTER IX.

For weeks, up beyond the camps on the Montreal River, Bland and Halycon searched for the lone prospector whom they believed to be Carl. They followed the miners' advice as to what lakes and rivers to ascend, for these men had a general knowledge of the geological formation of the land surface, and were possessed of some idea as to what parts a prospector would be likely to visit. Lewis had written to his partner asking the name of the man, but the partner could not remember, so the two, full of the hope that the solitary man could be no other than Carl, went on their quest without it. Bland, naturally sanguine of spirit, thought it was only a question of days when they should find him, but as two weeks slipped away his high expectations subsided as quickly as they had risen. He could, in any event, spend but a little longer in the search, for his father would need his presence shortly for the autumn business trips at home. The time came for him to go, and they retraced the arduous route back to the camps on Montreal River. From there Jerry went down again to join his father for home.

Clive did not go. He took a fresh supply of provisions, which they had caused to be sent in with the miners' shipments, and turned northward again in a

last attempt to find the lone prospector. This wild, secluded environment made him forget the pang of his own unfulfilment. Perhaps that was the reason he had not given up the search when Bland did. To wander and rove at the will of the wander-lust made him forget. The nature-love filled his being and eased in a measure the yearning that cried out for the one person in the world who had ever stirred his heart.

Thus Clive Halycon, enduring hardship and labor, which sat lightly on him because of his strength and hunting experience, sought for some sign of the way Carl—if it were Carl—had taken, but he saw not a sign, not even a deserted bough-tent or dead camp-fire.

When the first brilliant tint of autumn flamed in the leaves, Clive gave it up and began to work southward. In a few days he left behind the thickest rock-chasms and hardest portages, coming at last to Lake Scauron, whose outlet was the River Slade. From this the way wound by lakes and rivers which were quicker of passage, but dangerous at many points. It was late afternoon of a week-end day when Halycon reached Lake Scauron, and scintillating sunset arrows flew down and splintered on its glassy surface, turning the right side of his canoe to gold and merging into a crimson glow where it crept up over his hunting-shirt to the bare, muscled neck. Water, shore and sky made one panoramic range of iridiscent blending of amethyst and white fire, mauve and grey, saffron, magenta, and dun, woven in unspeakable harmony from the ripple-points to the

sheening autumn leaf, from the leaf and reed to the glorious, blazing empyrean above.

The wondrous beauty of it all checked the man's thought as he slowly paddled the length of the lake, and with a sigh he left it for the river current which had its source at the southern end. The paddler would have given much to pitch his night's camp on the margin of this heavenly lake, but a mile ahead, on the River Slade, lay Love's Rapid, a swift, bouldered channel, difficult to run on calm days and deadly in foul weather. Halycon was well versed in woodcraft, and no woodsman would have trusted this calm too far. A change might come in an hour or in a night, and he would rather have the Rapid behind him at sunrise. How the passage got its ironical name no one knows, and though many a hunter or trader has called it Death's Rapid, still the old name clings.

The chasm was not wind-tossed, but yet man-hungry, and Clive Halycon steeled his fingers on the paddle grip when he let the craft slide gently into the head-swirls.

It hung a moment and then shot downward with meteor speed. In the rushing chute the waters showed white fangs between the black rock jaws grasping at the tossing bow. Halycon, with arm, eye, and brain alert, plied his paddle in lightning passes, avoiding the granite crags and the tumbling waves.

Brr-o-o-o-m—s-s-wash-h-h! the torrent roared on both sides, striking the perpendicular side walls with

foaming white-caps. The first gulch was cleared with a leap, and he struck the middle eddy. Shaking and lurching the bark, its giant clutch drew and tore, but Halycon's great shoulder-strength edged the frail canoe out. Then the full force of mid-stream swept it downward like a cork.

Flying spray went over him in sheets. Flip! Flip! he used the paddle. Boom-m-m! the cauldron boiled. A fierce, wild joy thrilled him through and through. It was the glorying human emotion in battle with the elements.

Flip! Flip! Flip! he skimmed by the last knife-edged reef, and, hugging the shore from the whirling surge beneath, shot out in safety through the noisy, bubbling underflow.

"Ha!" he laughed, in exultation, wiping the spray from his face. Something tapped the side of his canoe. He scooped his hand out and caught it. It was the blade of a paddle broken near the shoulder.

CHAPTER X.

Halycon gave a quick look about. On the other bank the land ran out in a point, and the surly current was buffeting a smashed canoe where it had tossed on the edge.

"Jove! Someone has run through and been swamped!" Clive exclaimed. With a face of concern he forced his way across. Leaping out and pulling his own canoe out of reach of blows from the surf, he examined the battered craft. It was a total wreck, with a dozen gaps in bow and bottom. There was nothing in it.

"Poor duffer!" was his ejaculation. Turning to go on, a dim foot-scar caught his eye. The ledge of shore was hard, but in the hollows earth, mast, and moss had accumulated, and in one of these the sprawling mark of a toe was visible. It seemed to have been made by a tapped sole.

Halycon went down on his knees and searched intently. Here was another and another, leading away from the ledge toward the undergrowth. Ah! there the branches were bent aside and the brush was crushed and broken as if something had been dragged through. Halycon strode in. The crackling of boughs under-

foot was answered with a groan from the brake to his right.

"This way, friend!" came a feeble voice following on the groan. "I crawled out of that burning sun!"

Clive forced the fern away and saw the man.

His face was bloody and drawn; the hair was matted and the limbs all limp. Even through the partly dry and crumpled garments the twisted knots of swelling indicated breaks. He lay on a bed of moss and tufted reeds.

"I'm done, friend!" he said again, before the other could speak. "I am hurt inside as well."

"My poor fellow, you must have hit the rocks hard."

"Just like a cork in that gap! It's a terrible channel. You didn't come down?" he asked.

"Yes, I came down," answered Clive.

The wounded man half rose, but sank back with a face full of pain. "You're a good one!" he groaned.

"Come!" Halycon said. "I must fix you up." He lifted the prostrate form.

"Don't!" the feeble voice expostulated. "That awful sun!"

"It has gone down," Clive said, softly.

He was a big man, but Clive carried him out into the open.

In a few moments, under his quick action, a fire was burning briskly.

"It's no use stranger!" the poor fellow said, as he watched him. "I've only an hour or so."

"You'll drink some coffee," Halycon observed. "Then I'll doctor your bruises."

"No, partner, you will not. You know I'm done as well as I do. Own up now!"

He looked Clive in the eye.

"Well," the latter reluctantly declared, "I guess you are. I would like to have cheered you up though."

"That's all right, friend! It's good to have you with me. I rather feel that you're a man. Then that rapid proves it. Say!"—looking at Halycon's bronzed features—"Say! You've been wandering some yourself?"

"The best part of the summer!"

"Just like me! Women beat the dickens, don't they?"

Clive drew a sharp breath and bent over the coffee-pot to hide his confusion.

"Some do," he admitted.

"Beat the dickens!" repeated the weak voice. "Say! is that sun gone?"

Halycon looked at him anxiously, and the other man interpreted the look.

"No, friend," he said, "I'm not off my head, but that heat has burned into my brain all day, and I feel it yet. It was just a while ago that I crawled in. It was torture, but I couldn't die in that sun."

Halycon moved over to look at him more closely, but the prostrate man waved him back.

"Don't look!" he groaned. "I'm not nice to look at. I was once. At least she said so. I was white, Eastern,

groomed, and all the rest! You know it all. But the rocks have disfigured what the sun, wind, and rain had left."

Clive poured out a can of coffee and set it by him. He put the pot on again and lay down beside the fire.

The wounded companion raised his one uninjured arm with difficulty and took a sip of the hot liquid.

It seemed to clear his voice a little. "Women beat the dickens!" he said, for the third time. "Did you ever find one that was everything in the whole world to you?"

"Once!" Halycon answered. "That's why I'm here."

"We're a pair! I am here because someone is dear to me. If I did not love her so well, I would now be marrying her instead of lying here."

"What?" Clive asked in wonderment.

"We were engaged for three years," the stranger explained. "I have found out that she does not care."

"Yet she would marry you?"

"Yes, but I love her too well. In the spring, when I saw how things were, I took my canoe and headed for this wilderness, leaving a letter which released her from the engagement. I have been here ever since."

"You are from where?"

"Ottawa. It is hard, stranger, to cherish a dream for three years, and then have it slip from your heart."

Halycon's thoughts were far off. He was thinking of his own case. He had dreamed of a love for three months, and the awakening was gall. For the moment

he forgot his companion. He was back in dreamy, lake-starred, mountain-domed Banff once more. He could hear the hill-songs and the cataract-tunes which they both loved. He could picture the girl in all her loveliness as his soul remembered her. Then had come the night of bitter disenchantment!

A groan abruptly broke his dream. "Friend, give me more coffee!" The tone was weaker.

Halycon obeyed, and the pain-shattered voice went on:

"Three years! That awful rapid!" The breathing thickened. The man's mind was really gone now. He raved irrationally.

"Awful sun!" he moaned. "Alice, are you there? Here's a friend who has been good to me. When did you get back from Banff?"

Halycon leaped up at the words and caught his breath. "What?" he cried. "Say that again!"

"Alice, I couldn't marry you. Since you came back you don't care. That awful sun! Say, partner, how did you—miss—the eddy? I've been three years on the rapid. That coffee is good. Thank you, Alice. No, my brain burns. Where—is—the shade?"

The broken ravings of the man's delirium continued. Halycon moistened the baked lips. With the faltering words had come a great revelation, and Clive felt a surge of shame at heart. He was the one who had wrecked this man's love-dream. He reproached himself, but that could not change anything.

"Good-bye, Alice!" the voice whispered. "It's dark —and no sun! Partner, I say—it's over!"

The last word was but a gasp. A sickening convulsion ran through the frame. Halycon stood looking at the quiet form, and the tears dripped down his tanned cheeks.

Then the thought of his obligation to the dead arose. He could not take the body with him, for though the hardest portages were over, there were still long ones to make. If his path had been clear waterway, it would have been different. Clive smoothed the limbs as naturally as possible, ready for burial, and with his camp-spade dug a narrow grave where the shingle lay piled in a nook of the rocks. He took what few papers and things were in the clothes and bound them carefully together to return to the dead man's friends when he should find them on communicating with Alice Blendon. Engraved upon the sheath of the hunting knife, Clive read the name Charles Hooper.

In a coffin of soft fir branches Halycon laid the body to rest, murmuring a prayer as he covered it. There, in the depth of the wild northland, Charles Hooper found his tomb, and if he could have spoken from the silence, perhaps he would have approved. He was laid away in the heart of God's unsoiled country with the wind and wave to sing his requiem, with the moaning pines, whose voices of grief last longer than human sighs, to mourn beside his grave, with the virgin forest for a sacred abbey, and with the tribute of great soul

to great soul. What, in earthly passing, could be better?

At the camps on the Montreal, Clive told his story. The partner of Lewis confirmed his belief that the dead man was the lone prospector. He remembered now, when the name was mentioned, that the man had called himself Charles Hooper during his two days' stay in the Montreal camps before he pushed on to meet death in the wilderness.

But the partner of Lewis did not know it was the false Charles Hooper whom he had seen.

CHAPTER XI.

Ten days after Halycon left for the North, the bubble, which was in substance Consolidated Diamond Cobalt, burst. There was, however, no hue and cry throughout the country. Losers, ashamed of their imprudence, said not a word. In large cities men who had plunged heavily in the watered stock never admitted they had held a cent in the company's shares. It was through no investigation or suspicion of the public that the bubble burst. Public confidence is so serene, so sanguine, and so sympathetic that instinctive cunning and innate wariness show forth only after it is too late. There was a man in Cobalt, though, who was watching the proceedings of the company, and it was through him that the swindle was exposed. Robert Ridgeley pricked the bubble of the gang which he had seen operate in mining camps other than Cobalt by airing the "salt" in a weekly letter to the journals. Coming from such a man as Ridgeley, there was no one but knew it was gospel truth, and when a judicial investigation into the affairs of the Consolidated began, no officer or director of the company was to be found. Theodore, Freeman, Giles, and their tool, Jacob Gra-

ham, had secretly and hastily departed from Cobalt. Jasper & Jasper had been wise enough, moreover, to lay plans to make themselves safe should their scheme be exposed. They had acted but as ordinary solicitors to an apparently wealthy mining company which engaged their services. Further than that they knew nothing. They were in no way responsible for the sound or unsound financial condition of the concern, their connection being a purely legal one. So Jasper & Jasper put themselves about not one whit to escape the law as the others had. For them it was unnecessary to do so.

In the large cities, where one knows so little of his neighbor's life, those who lost in the broken Consolidated could not be easily specified on account of their reticence, but in a small village place, where every inhabitant knows the goings and comings of everyone else, facts like these were open as the day. All persons in the Humber village and surrounding community knew that Henry Thurston was a ruined man and that the Thurston place was mortgaged to the last red cent within a week after the news of the bubble-bursting reached the village. Gossip ran rife, and the few enemies of the Thurstons found a fine opportunity of making sarcastic comments and wise reflections. But neither comments nor reflections altered the case. Henry Thurston was down! The foot of misfortune had trampled heavily. The Consolidated mined not in

silver, calcite, galena, copper, or sulphides, but in savings and bank accounts, and the money for allotments did not line their shafts with timber. Instead, it lined the pockets of the men behind the mine. Their bubble had been pricked at last, but not before the pockets were bulging.

CHAPTER XII.

The streaming afternoon sun of autumn, coming through the vines of the open bay-window, struck aslant Jean Thurston's hair and lighted it all to golden radiance where she stood.

"Mr. Jasper," she was saying, "this is the last time I shall answer that question, and my answer is a decisive 'No!' I forbade you to reopen the subject. It is most embarrassing for me, and, I should think, humiliating to you. I do not want to wound you, but it can never, never be."

Jasper's eyes gleamed maliciously, and the blood rose to his face. Along with his many vices he possessed a stubborn pride, and it nettled him that this country girl disposed of his suit with such queenly indifference.

"That is your final decision?" he asked. "You cannot, of your free will, marry me?"

"My final decision!" she answered, with emphasis.

"Then I must change that will," Jasper declared. "Since your will is not free, I must force it."

Jean Thurston laughed contemptuously. "You talk like the proverbial villain in the play," she said. "I suppose you thought because we have lost nearly all we had that I would rush at the chance of marrying a

rich lawyer. Thank you, no! I want neither you nor your money. There is somewhere on the round of this earth a brave, true heart worth all the thousands you can pile together."

"It is Glover. Curse him!" Jasper burst out, unthinkingly.

"That will do, sir!" Jean said, going swiftly to the door.

Her hand was on the knob when Jasper cried: "Wait one moment! I have something I wish you to see. I beg pardon for my expression. I forgot myself."

"Be very, very brief," she said, coldly. He drew from his pocket a folded paper.

"I ask you once more to marry me. If you refuse, you know the inevitable." He had opened the paper out and held it in his hands before her eyes. It was the mortgage on the Thurston place.

Jean shrank back with a cry, but recovered herself immediately. "It is a forgery," she said, fiercely. "You wretch! Mr. Mackay holds the real one."

"No, my pretty lady," the lawyer answered. "This is the real one. Mr. Mackay did hold it. He does not now, for I do!"

"Oh!" she interposed. "He would not part with it. He told father he could have as long as he wished to redeem the place. He was so lenient."

"He would have been a very great fool not to part with it. My lady, that slip of paper cost me a thou-

sand dollars more than its real value. But that is nothing. I would give many thousands for you. Be assured that this is the mortgage on your place! For a thousand advance and the assurance that I would be as lenient as himself, Mr. Mackay parted with it.

"To a scheming wretch!" Jean cried, impetuously.

"Hold!" said Jasper. "I am not such a schemer as you think. I am even more lenient than Mackay. Give me a favorable answer and I destroy the mortgage! I shall give your father a clear title to his place again. They shall have the home that has always been in the Thurston name to do as they wish with it."

"And for that I must give you my heart, my love, my life? I must sell it to you? You know it is given elsewhere. Oh! you cad! you have schemed for this. You bought the mortgage so that you could do it. If I refuse?"

"I shall foreclose."

Jean dropped her head in her hands with heart-broken sobs. "Drive them out?" she moaned. "My poor father and mother! You will take their cherished home, the spot that is next to heaven to them? Oh! what manner of man are you?"

"It is the only way," Jasper grimly remarked. "You need draw no harsh pictures of what might be. One word from you and it all remains as it is. Nothing could be simpler. Which shall it be? Will you marry me—or not?"

"Oh! I cannot think! I cannot say!" the wretched girl sobbed. "Leave me. Give me time. Give me a—a—month!"

"You will decide sooner," Jasper said, "but we will say a month to please you. You can answer me then?"

"Yes, yes, but leave me. Go—" she pleaded.

Jasper went away with a cold smile of victory on his face. His was a double triumph. He had won against all odds, and, more than this, it was a sweet revenge on Glover.

CHAPTER XIII.

Colonel Theodore did not know whether the servants of the law were making any effort to ascertain the whereabouts of those who had composed the Consolidated Company, but, on the chance that they were, he thought it safer to travel about than to remain in one place. Thus it happened that his party, composed of Rita, Whitmore, his friend Stair, and a half-dozen more of their peculiar set, conscience-free and careless, were touring Quebec in the autumn, taking in the magnificent scenery of its rivers, rocks and falls, which afforded Rita the finest of landscapes for reproducing in color.

They had seen the most picturesque parts of the St. Maurice, Saguenay, Chaudière, and other beautiful streams, and had later pushed far up the Ottawa valley, even as far, at Rita's wish, as the farthest settlement, whose godfather was one of the lumber-kings. At this wild, beautiful post of Carvelle, in the Pontiac, they remained many days, for the girl declared it the most magnificent of all. There were dozens of scenes she must paint, and it pleased the Colonel to stay. The spot was secluded, restful, and picturesque. The party of friends were a happy lot, and a two weeks' camping, as it might be called, would be delightful.

Whitmore and Stair decided to canoe up through to Maucasqueen Lake for recreation and fishing. Whitmore had been up in the spring and knew the way. They did not fancy lying idle while Rita indulged her passion for art to the oblivion of all persons about. They admired her and were happy in her presence, but no marble goddess was less susceptible to admiration, flattery or any other emotion than Rita when she was painting. She commanded the party to stay, and it, perforce, had to remain at her whim, but Whitmore and his friend pushed on with the intention of returning before the others should be ready to leave.

They went on by river, lake, and portage, and, as they travelled northward, another canoe was winding southward on the same route. In it was a figure well known throughout the Ottawa Valley and the hunting and trading sections. It was Beteric, known as the voyageur. He was hunter, trader, trapper, and guide all in one. On many a trip he had guided Carl and Clive when hunting bear, moose, or deer, and to them he was a close comrade. They had not seen him since their last fall hunt, but it came to Beteric's mind that he would soon get word from the sturdy friends who loved the chase in common with himself. All summer he had been in the northern labyrinths on a mission which couldn't safely be mentioned in the law's hearing. He knew the north country as no one else knew it. Government parties on surveys or any other service always secured the voyageur if he could be found. The

Hudson Bay men made him tempting offers to come into their ranks permanently, but a few months of the year was all for which Beteric could be bound. He was a bird of passage, a roamer, and a true son of the wild. But always, in his wanderings, he had a place to which he could turn his thoughts and love as to a home, and that was the settlement of Carvelle. Now, after a summer's absence, he was homing once again, and his heart thrilled with the thought. He came at length to his last portage, at the end of which he could launch his canoe on Lac du Core, whence his path lay through clear water down to the settlement.

Laboriously the voyageur picked his way over the boulder carpet and through the hemlock halls of the portage, grunting under the burden of his canoe and dunnage. Part way across, the sound of toiling reached him, and in a thick, scarred tamarac reach he came face to face with two men packing over from the opposite end.

"Holla!" said Beteric, the voyageur.

"Hello, halfbreed!" said the two.

"W'ere you mans go?" asked Beteric, ignoring the slurring appellation.

"Away north up Snake River, Maucasqueen Lake, and maybe farther! There is a cabin up there. We will stay two weeks."

"W'at do?" inquired the French-Canadian. It is woodsman's etiquette to always inquire another's business.

"Hunt and fish!" was the answer. "Ever been there?"

"Been dere many taim!" responded the voyageur, slipping his load to earth and seating himself on one of the bags while slowly proceeding to fill a short, black pipe. The two put down their burden in like manner and pulled out pipes and pouches.

"Here!" said the elder, when he saw the plug of ill-looking weed from which the voyageur was cutting a smoke. "Here, try this." He tossed over his pouch full of best Virginian.

Beteric filled his bowl and returned the pouch. Then he lit up and sank back in the green shade with a sigh of content.

"Bon tabac!" he commented, through the fragrant haze. "You lak' heem?"

"Sick of it!" said the donor, puffing indifferently. "Sick of everything down south! We want to get away from it all. We thought we'd try Maucasqueen Lake. You've been there?"

"Many taim Ah been dere. Bon for mak' chasse, bon for mak' feesh! Oui, bon as dis tabac! Mais you no mak' chasse now!"

"How's that?"

"De season clos'."

"We don't care about the season."

Beteric chuckled. "Dat w'at man say by moi on Lac Doixaut dis las' fall. He mak' chasse an' keel

deer. Warden catch heem. Dey fin' dat man feefty dollars."

"Are there any wardens up around Lake Maucasqueen?"

"Deux! Mais dey gon' away nord dis taim."

"Where are you going?"

"Carvelle! Ah Beteric, de voyageur."

"Come back with us for a couple of weeks. We are then returning to Carvelle. We will give you a dollar a day."

Beteric silently debated.

"Two dollars a day!" the other urged. "Come! The afternoon is shortening. We want to make Four-Mile Lake by dark."

"Bon!" assented Beteric, turning about to retrace his route. "Ah carry dis for you."

Seizing a heavy leather gun and tackle case, he shifted it on to his own dunnage-pack. As he turned it to bind it to the other luggage, the side with the owner's name came in view, and the half-breed, for he could read, saw the words, Richard Whitmore, marked in plain black letters.

CHAPTER XIV.

Beteric dropped the case into the underbrush at the side of the path as if a rock-snake had bitten him. His nostrils went wide like a beast's in anger, and a swelling choking ran up the muscles of his chest and throat where his shirt lay open at the neck. The dark eyes gleamed with a fire kindred to that of camp-coals.

"W'ich you mans—is W'itmore?" His tones were irregular with some strange emotion.

"Why, I am!" the nearest said. "My friend is Alix Stair? What's wrong?"

Beteric's face contorted with wild fury. He flung himself in front of Whitmore, his great hunting-knife flashing in his uplifted hand.

"Diable!" he cried. "Ah keel you! Ah keel you! Mak' feex for fight. Ah kill you, mais Ah keel in fair fight."

"What do you mean? Put down that knife!"

"Non! Mak' feex for fight."

Beteric's voice rose in thundering passion, and the awful rage of his countenance sent a chill through Whitmore's limbs.

"Fight, you fool!" he cried. "For what?"

"You ask for w'at? Diable! You rueen Marie Jeunvas, de girrl Ah loove," roared the voyageur. "Las' printemps, w'en Ah away nord, you come for holeeday. You mak' loove for pass de taim. You win Marie's loove. You rueen dat girrl. Ole Jeunvas goin' keel you 'fore he died. He no find. Ah goin' keel you, mais Ah no find. Onlee, Ah have de name. Now Ah find you. Mak feex for fight!" Beteric's fury flamed in his words. The flush of guilt which overspread Whitmore's face increased it.

Both travellers were unarmed, all their weapons being in the packs. Whitmore made a slight sign to Alix and the latter suddenly jumped for them. Beteric, however, was on his guard. One bound and he was astride the duffel where it lay in the path. His great knife high in the air, ready to strike certain death, forced Stair back.

"Queeck!" he called. "Here knife." He threw Whitmore a weapon similar to his own. The Southerner took it mechanically.

"Back!" said Beteric to Stair, threatening with his blade, and Alix had to retreat behind Whitmore on the narrow path.

"Prêt?" snarled the half-breed, ready to rush. His enemy in sheer despair and self-defence put up his guard.

Quicker than a hawk the half-breed rushed. Whitmore struck viciously. Beteric caught the descending wrist and closed in. The Southerner had the muscles

of a trained athlete, but he was as a child in the grasp of the revenge-inspired voyageur.

Whitmore's body bent sideways in the force of Beteric's grip, and he saw the gigantic forearm with its glittering blade above his eyes. With a cry of fear he strove for a low grapple. Their bodies, leaning into the branches at the side of the track, gave Stair the chance he had been looking for, and he sprang over the stamping feet, locking a strangle-hold round the half-breed's neck to pull him from his companion.

On the instant Beteric caught his heel in the crook of Whitmore's leg, and the three crashed in a heap. The glittering weapon struck downward, sinking to the haft between Whitmore's neck and shoulder, the red blood covering all three.

"Ha, bon!" gasped Beteric, wrenching at the knife to use on his second assailant. Then his words died in the strangle-hold. An iron vice seemed on his throat. He twisted to left, to right—with no release! He was slowly choking. If he could not break the hold, he was done.

Suddenly drawing on his muscles for every ounce of their strength, Beteric cast his head down and out. Both figures twisted a foot. The voyageur's shoulder now rested against a small rock, and, using it as a fulcrum, he cast his legs upward, bearing sideways with his last fighting power.

It told! Slowly the form of Stair slipped over him,

fighting, fighting to keep back, his foe struggling like a demon, too. Another heave!—crash! they both rolled through the underbrush fringing the ledge and struck with a sickening thud on the rocky shore below. Stair's body swung underneath, and the force of the impact, with the voyageur's great weight above, drove out all consciousness.

Beteric, badly scraped and shaken, arose. "Bien!" he murmured, and the smile on his face through its blood was good. It was the smile of justice.

Examining Stair's recumbent form, he saw the former was only stunned. Climbing up to the canoe, he loosened some tump-lines and bound Alix Stair's limbs securely. He carried him to the other end of the portage. Then he bound Whitmore's wound with a rude bandage. The man was plainly dying. From time to time a groan came from the pallid lips, and Beteric moistened them with brandy from his flask.

Uplifting him, the voyageur bore him as gently as he could over with Stair. Next he placed the travellers' canoe with its camp outfit and weapons in the bushes, concealing them by bending the boughs of growing shrubs as a screen. Taking his own canoe and the fallen knives, the victor reached the end of the passage, lifted the two in, and embarked.

The sun had died. Dim vapors pirouetted this way and that through the lower air-levels, and the warm summer hum of evening things rose in shrill cadence.

Straight across the water-plane of Lac du Core his paddle-blade drove. A light breeze cooled his heated frame and dried the blood from the scratches.

By moonrise, Beteric reached the outlet. Moving now more swiftly, the light craft was guided down the river on whose banks the settlement lay a half-day's journey below.

Midnight found him almost there. Tremulous star-gleams smote through the fir-branches and arrowed the plastic way ahead. The wounded man in the bow and the bound man in the stern groaned at intervals. Beteric often gave them a sip of brandy each.

His heart had softened. Justice in his thinking had been satisfied. He was carrying Whitmore to breathe his last breath at the feet of the girl with whom he had trifled. Beteric loved her still, and she would thank him.

On, with rhythmic sweep, he glided, his paddle casting dark hollows between the diamond ridges, mingling moonlight and wave, mixing river mist and balsam scent in sweet, odorous delight.

The night was beautiful. Drinking air and night at once, the voyageur swung round the last bend. There lay the settlement as he had left it months ago, but it was not wrapped in slumber as he had expected. From several windows twinkling lights beamed.

Beteric edged his canoe into the landing-place.

"Holla!" he called.

"Holla!" answered a surprised voice from a house

adjoining the wharf. The voyageur recognized it as Randea Scurelle's.

"Holla, Randea!" he cried, again.

"Beteric, n'est ce pas?" asked Randea, running down.

"Oui! Ah come home."

"Come in taim," said Randea, sadly.

"W'at you tell to moi?"

"Marie—elle dead!"

"Bon dieu!" screamed Beteric. "Randea, you mak' de lie!"

"Non!" Randea persisted. "Elle dead. Dat girrl tak' carboleeck dis night."

A numb feeling crept over the voyageur's nerves. His voice was dead and cold when he spoke.

"Pourquoi?" he asked.

"W'itmore!" was the one-word answer.

"Randea," Beteric said, reaching a hand which his friend clasped. "Randea"—then his voice broke, for the blinding tears smarted in his eyes and feeling choked him at the comrade's hand-grip.

"Randea," he began again, and pointed to the bow. "Dere W'itmore!"

"Mon dieu!" Randea breathed, peering down. "You keel heem?"

"Oui! Mak' fight wed knife on de portage. Deux to moi!"—pointing to Stair.

"Diable!" cried his friend, in admiration.

"For Marie," Beteric said, brokenly.

"Et pour ole Jeunvas," added his friend.

Without another word the voyageur raised the hardly-breathing body of Whitmore to Randea, who laid it gently down before carrying it to someone's house. Beteric loosed the tump-lines from Stair's legs and helped him out, for he could walk, though badly bruised.

Then he shifted the dunnage-bags and seated himself on the thwart.

"Adieu!" he said to Randea.

"Marie go bury to-morrow," the comrade said. "You no leave dis night."

"Adieu, Randea!" came the voice from mid-stream.

"Par dieu!—Arrêtez!" called his comrade, but Beteric did not pause, and Randea added, softly: "Au r'voir!"

"Non," Beteric called back. "Adieu!"

The birch craft swept the bend, throwing up a swirl of ripples, and, splitting moonlight and wave at once, the voyageur pointed his bow for the silent North.

CHAPTER XV.

Two days Beteric worked from the Pontiac in over the boundary, and there, in the Nipissing wild, north of Montreal River, he came upon a lone camp-fire at evening of the second day. The smoke rose from the rocks beside an unnamed tributary, and the voyageur paddled full upon it. The man bending over the fire stood upright. "Beteric?" he cried, unbelieving.

"Le Prince!" the voyageur shouted, "Le Prince—par dieu, mon camarade!"

"What the deuce brought you here?" Carl asked. "Not that you are unwelcome, old friend! Remember that, but I hadn't dreamed of you being within miles and miles of this spot."

"Ah tell toi," Beteric replied, "mais Ah mak' meal first."

"Right!" said Carl. "You must be hungry, and the meal is ready. I was just taking the coffee from the fire when I heard your paddle."

The voyageur tumbled out and drew up his canoe. The two then fell to eating with open-air appetites, talking only in monosyllables till they had finished. Then Carl piled fresh fuel on the coals in front of his little prospector's tent and lay down in the ruddy glow.

Beteric filled his pipe and told his tale, every word the truth. When he had finished he arose.

"You not want moi pour friend après dis. Ah leeve toi now," he said.

"Not by a darned sight!" his friend declared, as he took the voyageur by the shoulders and put him back on his log seat again. "Look here, Beteric! Your blood may not be a clear strain, and your skin may be dark, but you're white through and through. That scoundrel got his deserts, and he got it in fair fight. If there was unfairness, it was on his friend's part."

"Oui, deux to moi at las'."

"Now," Carl said, "I will tell you my story, to show you why I am here." In turn he told the voyageur all that had befallen.

"You mak' wrong," Beteric observed, at the end.

"How?"

"Dat girrl!—she loove toi. She break de heart. Go to elle! Dat w'at been better. Oui, mak' wrong!"

"But, Beteric," Carl argued, "would a good girl want a gambler, one who had been unfaithful to her? Would she want him to come and ask forgiveness which she could not give? She would be glad she did not have to say cruel things. It was better for him to go than have her cast him out."

"Non!" Beteric contradicted. "Elle hav' de heart. She good girrl, magnifique good girrl, you say. She loove toi. She know you mak' leetle wrong, mais not like W'itmore. Elle forgeeve. Une magnifique good

girrl forgeeve. Eef elle do not, den elle not une good fille."

Beteric's philosophy fell without effect upon Carl's ears. It was his first sin, and it seemed mountain-high. It haunted him like a hideous nightmare. Sometimes, in thinking of Jean, his heart grew so tender that he felt like going back, like throwing himself at her feet and begging for love once more; but swiftly would come the picture of the night he had stood at the green cloth and tossed the gold over, with all eyes in the room upon him. He had gambled and gambled the hours away till there was nothing left in the bank of the Clan. With this would arise the companion picture of the night he held a dark-eyed, passionate face close to his and kissed the love from off the sensuous lips. Ah! Jean would never forgive. Nor would he ask. It was too much!

"Beteric!" Carl said. "You see this hill behind?"

"Oui."

"It's full of silver."

"Dieu! How you know dat?"

"I have been prospecting up here for a long time. I was disappointed on many occasions, but at last I have struck it. There are millions of dollars in that machinery. It's the richest mine in Cobalt, Beteric, but what use is it to me? All the mines in the world wouldn't be anything now, old friend. I've lost all the treasure of real worth. I want to be alone, though.

That's why I've stayed with it. The search was a joy. I thought it would be a joy, too, when I would find ore, but it isn't. Beteric, I'd give that whole hill for one kind word of hers."

"Mais, dat girrl!—why elle no send après toi eef elle want toi?" Beteric asked.

"She didn't want me," Carl answered. "Anyway, no one would find me, for I gave the camps which I came through the name of Hooper. I didn't give my own, and none of them knew me. They're all fresh prospectors down around the Montreal River."

He piled more wood on the fire. "It's getting chilly," he said.

"Non," observed the voyageur. "leetle hotter dis night."

"I don't see how you call it hotter," Carl observed. "I shiver at times." He rolled up nearer the fire.

"W'at, cold have toi?"

"Yes."

Beteric rose and came up to him, looking sharply at his face. "Cold have toi like dis?" he asked, passing a hand from the chest down.

Carl nodded. "Why?" he inquired.

Beteric put his palm on the other's forehead. It was burning hot.

"Mon dieu," he cried, "toi have de fever."

"Pshaw, man, it is only a chill! I got overheated taking out ore to-day."

"Toi have fever nex' matin," Beteric declared. "Mak' bed queeck!"

He forced Carl to go to bed at once. Going off into the dark woods, he found with some difficulty some herbs of medicinal value, and long into the night he brewed them over the camp-fire, giving Carl a bitter draught before he himself lay down in his blankets.

CHAPTER XVI.

BETERIC'S words came true. Next morning Carl was in the grip of the fever, and the draughts the voyageur brewed only partly checked it. He grew worse, and Beteric saw there was but one thing to do and that was to take him out the way he himself had come in from the settlement. If he waited, Carl would die. He could not be left alone while the voyageur went for the settlement's doctor, since it was a two days' journey each way. Beteric must take him out, and as quickly as possible! Perhaps in all the tales that the north people tell, there is none so striking in its heroism and true-heartedness as the story of how the voyageur brought out, single-handed, a sick man from lone Nipissing to Carvelle. He paddled all day and all the long night. On the portage he had to make double trips, carrying Carl over first and then going back for his canoe and packs. It was a herculean task, but Beteric never stopped, and, instead of making a two days' trip, he reached Carvelle in a little over a day and a night. His sturdy race recall his deed daily, and many a hunter and trapper will sit up half the night to tell you of Beteric the voyageur. He reached Carvelle just in time. Had he taken the days only for paddling, the

doctor of the settlement said Carl would have been past hope. As it was, his condition was precarious.

At the time Beteric arrived, the Theodore party was about to leave. Whitmore was dead, and they were taking his body away. Their departure was set for the afternoon of that day. Beteric had come in the morning. After attending Carl, the doctor sought Rita to say farewell. He had become infatuated with her beauty and wanted to see her in the hope of extracting a promise for a future renewal of their intercourse. This, to his satisfaction, he got. Then he apologized for hastening away and mentioned his new patient.

"A bad case of fever!" he said. "I cannot be long absent. Some prospector who got caught up in the wilds! The voygeur brought him down single-handed. By George! it was a plucky thing."

"Ah!" Rita murmured. "I have heard that these river-voyageurs are so brave. A prospector, you said. Do you know his name?"

"Upon my soul, I don't. The case needed such prompt attention that I forgot to make inquiries. Le Prince, the voyageur called him. He will know his name."

"What?" Rita screamed. "What did he call him?"

"The Prince!—but why?"

"Quick!" she exhorted. "Take me to him. There can be only one Prince. Man, don't stand!"

She seized him by the sleeve and dragged him to the doorway. "Where, where?" she panted.

They sped breathlessly to Dr. Basil's house. Rita's fears were realized, and she ran to the sick man's bed with a low cry, but the doctor led her into another room.

"He must not be disturbed," he said. "You must make no noise."

"Oh! save him," Rita hysterically pleaded. "He must not die. Do you hear? He must not."

"I shall do all in my power. His condition is critical, but I feel confident I can save him. But why are you so excited? Do you know him?"

"Know him? Yes—the best man that ever breathed!"

"Ah!" Basil exclaimed, in a tone of suspense, "He is something to you?"

"No," she cried, quickly, "his faith is plighted to someone else. Save him for her sake. Man, do your best!"

Basil's fear subsided at the knowledge that Carl's word was given to someone dear to him. The sudden suspicion that this man would stand between him and the girl he loved vanished, and he threw his whole heart and soul into fighting the monster of darkness away from the weak frame in his room. The Theodore party left, but Rita, to Dr. Basil's intense delight, would not go with them. She remained to act as nurse on the case of the sick prospector. She assured her father that it was a matter of life and death, and that there was no one but herself competent to take such a

delicate duty. It must not be left to the French-Canadian women. Colonel Theodore could not stay himself, as he had to go with Whitmore's body to clear up the circumstances of his death to his friends, but Mrs. Forbes, an elderly widow of the party, agreed to remain with Rita.

So the girl watched the flickering flame of Carl's life day and night, snatching a few hours' sleep now and then, but always attentive, gentle, and tender in ministering to his needs. If Beteric was the first angel of mercy who succored Carl in his helplessness, Rita was the second. Doctor Basil marvelled at her aptitude, at the cool, scientific way in which she did his bidding, and at the softness and silence of her touch and movements. She was all perception and intuition. She was full of repose and sweet sympathy. No one could know from her face that such a tumult of fear, hope, doubt, disappointment, and unfulfilled love was raging in her soul. The hidden fire, burning so fiercely, never once showed on the surface. She was the calm, sweet, loving angel of mercy at a sick man's bedside, and Basil's love grew a hundredfold as he saw what a woman she was in this new and hitherto unrevealed phase of her life.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE power of death, clutching at the weak strands of an enfeebled human life, is mighty; but the saving force of science, impelled by the fire of great love, is mighty, too. Death clutched hard at Carl Glover's frame, but two were at his bedside who fought with unflagging energy. The woman fought with unceasing persistence for what she loved; the man strove beneath the eyes of her he adored for the guerdon of her approbation. It was a conflict of spirit against spirit, magnetism against magnetism, and a hard, long fight it was. Yet the woman and man won over the monster of death. Slowly they nursed Carl back, step by step, till recovery was certain. Then one night Rita told Doctor Basil what she intended to do.

"He is past all danger?" she asked him that night.

"Yes," he said, warmly, "and I think it is due to you. Had I been alone, I don't know if it would have been this way."

"I may go for two or three days? I shall not be any longer than I can help."

"Yes, but why do you wish to go and then return? Can you not wait till he is able to be up and about?"

"He must not know who nursed him," she replied. "So far, he could not know for the darkened room and

your forbiddance of his speaking at all. But in a little we cannot keep that from him. He will have light and speech, and then he will discover who has been with him."

"But why this strange proceeding?" Basil asked.

"Listen!" Rita said. "Doctor Basil, I once brought a great sin into this man's life, a great sorrow to him and to another who is dear to him. Now I go to atone for my wrong. He despised himself so that he went without a word to her, thinking she would never forgive. He will never go to her. I know his spirit, and he will never go. As soon as he is sufficiently well, he will lose himself as before. I must bring her here. If she has a woman's heart, she will forgive and come."

Stepping to Carl's shaded couch, she bent over him. "Doctor Basil," she said, softly, "you will witness this as a chaste kiss."

Stooping, she pressed her lips tenderly and reverently to his brow.

"For a time—perhaps for the only time in my life—I have been an angel of mercy," Rita went on. "It has changed me. I am a different woman. Being so close to death has shown me what a soul is really worth. The soul we have fought for here I was shattering one time. Now is my atonement."

Rita left at once, and the space of another full day found her at the little hamlet by the Humber. Without delay she sought the Thurston home. The month for decision Jasper had given Jean was shortening

with horrible rapidity, and as the days flew by her agony increased. Her father and mother had begged her not to sacrifice herself for them. They would go, would leave the old place and make their way in the world somewhere else. Mrs. Halycon had pleaded with her, too, advising her not to make the sacrifice and offering them a home with herself and Clive. When Clive returned, the mother said, he would take the mortgage over from Jasper, but Jean knew Jasper would not relinquish his hold. She could not hear of going to the Halycons' even till Clive came, and she had steeled her heart to give up all her happiness for the sake of her parents. Every day she fought the battle afresh. Each night the thought of it lurked in her dreams. A thousand times she made the resolve, and a thousand times the pang of yearning for one absent made her burst into an agony of tears. If ever a person knew the approach to Gethsemane's garden, Jean Thurston knew it. The evening Rita Theodore arrived at the little village, Jean was sitting in the dark silence of the verandah, battling with her grief. Her head was bowed upon her crossed arms, and she did not see a queenly figure sweep up, till a footstep sounded on the walk in front of her. Jean gave a low cry of fright.

"Don't be alarmed," said the unknown woman. "I am Rita Theodore."

Even in the dusk Rita could see the white, tense face of Jean, and she exclaimed: "Don't! I know what

you would say. I know how you would curse me. I am she who brought sorrow and separation to you. But it will avail nothing to reproach. I come to take you to him."

"You know where he is? You have known—" Jean cried.

"No, I did not know. Now he is at Carvelle, up in the Pontiac. He has been ill. No, don't gasp. He is past all danger. I have come for you before he is well enough to lose himself again. You must come at once."

"But you," she stammered, "how—? It is so strange!"

"Atonement," said Rita. "Come, get ready to go!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

Another angel stood by Carl's bedside, but this time it was an angel of forgiveness. He lay sleeping. He had been sleeping since she came, and she was waiting for him to wake. At length Carl stirred, murmuring a name in his fitful repose. Jean bent down, to hear her own name whispered, and the glad love-light sprang in her eyes. Slowly he awoke and saw her. A great cry burst from him, a cry of rapture which ended in a sob of shame, when he remembered. He turned his face from hers and carried her hand to his lips, pressing kisses upon it which burnt no more than the hot, falling tears.

"No, Carl," Jean said, "not that!" She forced his head to turn again and took it upon her breast, kissing him upon his lips.

For a moment Carl looked in unbelief at her. Then he understood why she had come. Crying aloud, he clasped his arms around her neck. "Jean," he murmured, "is it true?"

"Yes," she said. "You would not come to me, so I came to you. Carl, Carl, how could you go? Oh! I suffered so much, and, Prince, how can I tell you? It is not over yet. Our place is mortgaged. Father made

some losing mining-investments. Jasper holds the mortgage, and unless I marry him he will foreclose."

"Jasper, the wretch!" Carl exclaimed. "Where did he get the mortgage? Marry you! My darling, I'd kill him first."

"Hush!" Jean said. "Doctor Basil commanded you not to excite yourself. Even now our time for conversation is up. But Jasper schemed to get a hold on us. He paid Mr. Mackay away above the figure value and got the mortgage. Then he offered me the choice of marrying him or seeing poor father and mother turned out. Oh! Prince, I've had a month of agony. He let me have a month to decide. I might have sacrificed myself then. Yes, I am sure I should. But now, Carl, I can't. I can't give you up! Oh! what shall we do?"

"Girlie," Carl said, brushing her tears away with a smile, "girlie, don't trouble. I have a mine away up in the north that is worth millions. We will get his mortgage for a few thousands when he finds he cannot have you. Now I thank God that I have it. I told Beteric of it the night he found my camp. I said it was nothing to me. Ah! I little knew how much you needed it. But did Clive not shield you from this rascal?"

Clive was away in the north searching for you, and is there yet. He had not returned when I left. All last autumn Clive travelled the West seeking you, and

all this summer he has been in Temiskaming on the same errand. Prince, Prince! You would not be found, and we wanted you so."

"Jean, Jean," Carl said, holding her face close. "You can forgive! It's just as Bland said. 'What's love worth if it won't forgive?' Kiss me, so I can't forget."

The days of convalescence were sweet for them. Rita had never seen Carl since the night she had gone to atone. She forbade Jean acquainting him with the knowledge that she was there or that she nursed him till she should be gone. When he could travel about, Rita and Mrs. Forbes advised the Doctor to allow him go home to the Humber. Rita departed to join her father and his party, who were preparing to take a trip on the Continent, but before she went she refused the offer of another man's love—that of Dr. Basil! And to do her justice, it was the first time a refusal of this nature had given her pain. Mrs. Forbes, whose home was in Three Rivers, decided not to go with the party to Europe, and, on Rita's request, remained with Jean in the settlement. When Dr. Basil gave Carl permission to travel, Mrs. Forbes journeyed with the two lovers home to the Humber, later returning to her native city. Clive had reached home when they got there, having come a few days before. His astonishment was profound when he heard how things had turned out. By comparing notes they found that

Beteric arrived at Carl's camp upon the evening that Clive found the real Hooper dying. Clive's search was over. The reward was priceless. If he had never gone into the wilderness, he would never have learned that Alice Blendon was free.

CHAPTER XIX.

Once more the dear, sweet Humber country lay under the spell of the harvest moon. The garnered fields spread rolling mantles of golden stubble beneath its glow. The woods and orchard lands blurred up in half-lit masses against the rim of the night-world, casting deep shadows down each meadow, dell and glade. The river rolled again in a slumbrous sheet of unbroken crystal, save where the pebbly rapids merged it into violet gleams that faded and gleamed, gleamed and faded. The autumn haze lay low on the ridges and shrouded the flatter valleys. The haunting dream-perfume of night filled all the air to set souls a-thrilling with a strange, indefinable longing that seemed like some pagan call to the barbaric strain in the human blood. The sleep-time had come. Like the tender face of God the heavens leaned, loking upon the child of promise—the earth!

And beneath the splendor, in the nook of the mulberry trees, two human beings lingered. Their lives had blossomed into promise. Even through the dark hours, when all was lost to them, a hidden power was guiding the trend of their steps. Now they could understand the plan which before indicated nothing but blind adversity.

"Jean," Carl whispered, as they sat on the old rustic seat. "Our happiness is too great. It seems too much that everything should come right."

"Carl," she murmured, "everything comes right in the end."

"'God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!'"

"It is true," he said. "I thank God for it. There is but one more obligation resting upon me."

"What is that?" Jean asked.

"It is the matter of the Consolidated Diamond Cobalt Company. I do not know my uncle's whereabouts, but I cannot leave the stigma upon his name. I am going to offer, through the newspaper mediums, to buy back the certificates of those who invested in the Consolidated at the same price as they paid."

"Oh, Carl!" she cried. "I never thought of that. You have such a princely heart. You are far above me."

"Remember when I was so far below!" he said.

"I have forgotten," she whispered. "It was a bad dream. I have wakened from it. Everything is right."

"Yes," Carl murmured, tenderly. "You and God are so near—

"'All's right with the world!'"

And just as Carl foretold, Jasper was glad to hand over the deed of mortgage on the Thurston homestead

at an advance upon the figure he had paid Mr. Mackay, the local barrister. The pathway of the schemer seemed uncommonly lucky just at that time, but the machinery of justice was making investigation into his dealings without his knowledge. It was not long before it was made plain that he had appropriated funds from another mining company with which he was associated. Realizing that arrest would immediately follow exposure, Jasper disappeared, and, although closely followed by detectives, he had start enough to reach South America and enter the Argentine Republic, where he was safe from extradition.

Beteric, who proved himself such a hero, was located in the north by Carl, and induced to come back. Whitmore's relations, to prevent the scandal connected with his death from spreading, gave out the report that he had been drowned by accident while canoeing in the Pontiac, nor did they attempt to bring Beteric into the courts. Carl made the voyageur manager of his depot for supplies, when he opened the mine, in recognition of his service. He also set aside a block of the stock in Beteric's name.

Appreciation of Rita Theodore's noble act, in effecting the reconciliation and atoning for all the suffering she had caused, was shown by Carl, at Jean's suggestion, in painting a picture which is truly a masterpiece. It hangs in one of the galleries of the capital, and the curious may find it there.

It depicts a young girl kneeling, with hands upraised in prayer, before an altar, above which the Angel of God is hovering. The picture is a triumph of art in the wonderful reality of the supplicant's expression. The face which wears that expression is the face of Rita Theodore.

Beneath, you may read the title—Atonement!

THE END.